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Dell & Intel Edition

Social Media Marketing

FOR

DUMMIES[®]

Learn to:

- Apply social influence to your online marketing campaign
- Select the right social media sites for your business
- Update your Web site for the social media world
- Measure the results of your efforts

Shiv Singh



Dear Business Owner,

Dell Canada and Intel Canada are presenting you with this guide to Online Social Media Marketing because each of our businesses is strengthened by the value of the relationships we build online, and we'd like to help your business to do the same.

The Internet is becoming the primary means for a prospective buyer to evaluate a business' products or services and online social media communities like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter rank high on web searches because they are so frequently used. However, too many businesses are not aware of what's being said about them or even know how to start an online conversation with their customers.

Both Dell and Intel rely on online social media marketing as a strategy for collaboration and building relationships with our customers. We welcome you to participate in our online communities and encourage you to plan out your own social media marketing strategy.

The knowledge you can gain from this book will also help you to harness your investment in Dell and Intel technology for business growth. We look forward to sharing in your success.

Sincerely,

Dell Canada, Dell PartnerDirect, and Intel Canada

P.S. Participate in our online communities at communities.dell.com and communities.intel.com.

Social Media Marketing FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Shiv Singh



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About the Author

A recognized digital marketer, **Shiv Singh** has been with Razorfish (www.razorfish.com) since 1999, and he has worked in the Boston, New York, San Francisco, and London offices. As the company's VP & Global Social Media Lead, Shiv helps the agency introduce its clients, such as Carnival Cruise Lines, Microsoft, Citibank, Ford Motor Company, Panasonic, Novartis, and Starwood, to social influence marketing. And he shows them how to incorporate social media and social technologies to support marketing and business objectives. His role also includes capability development, developing strategic partnerships, leading thought leadership efforts, and encouraging experimentation with social media across the agency.

Shiv has been published widely, and he has spoken at conferences such as South by Southwest Interactive, the Direct Marketing Association's Leader's Forum, OMMA Global, O'Reilly Graphing Social Patterns, the ARF Annual Summit, and the Social Ad Summit. He has also been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* and by Reuters, Associated Press, *Adweek*, *Ad Age*, and several other noted publications discussing digital strategy and social influence marketing.

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Acquisitions and Editorial

Project Editor, Trade Edition:

Rebecca Senninger

Acquiring Editor: Robert Hickey

Manager, Custom Publications:

Christiane Coté

Project Coordinator, Canada:

Pauline Ricablanca

Copy Editor: Laura Miller

Cartoons: Rich Tennant

(www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator, US:

Lynsey Stanford

Layout: Samantha K. Cherolis,

Melissa K. Jester

Proofreaders: Melissa Cossell,

Lisa Stiers

John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd.

Bill Zerter, Chief Operating Officer

Karen Bryan, Vice-President, Publishing Services

Jennifer Smith, Publisher, Professional and Trade Division

Alison Maclean, Managing Editor

Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher, Consumer Dummies

Kristin Ferguson-Wagstaffe, Product Development Director, Consumer Dummies

Ensley Eikenburg, Associate Publisher, Travel

Kelly Regan, Editorial Director, Travel

Composition Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services

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Introduction

On August 23, 1999, Blogger launched as one of the earliest dedicated blog-publishing tools. At that time, social media was considered a niche activity on the fringes of the Internet. But today, Blogger is the 16th most popular site on the Internet, hosting millions of blogs. In a span of three years, Facebook has grown to over 200 million users, and Wikipedia, for all practical purposes, has replaced Britannica as an encyclopedia. Social media is today the most important phenomena transforming the Internet.

There is more to it than the phenomena, though. It also presents unique marketing opportunities, providing new ways to reach social influencers and allow for people to influence each other and do the marketing for the brand. **Social influence marketing (SIM)** forces companies to rethink how they market online, to whom they market, and how to structure their own organizations to support these new marketing opportunities.

Social Media Marketing For Dummies is written to help you make sense of the madness. This book simply explains what social influence marketing is and how you can harness it to achieve your objectives as a marketer. It also aims to help you prioritize what's important and what isn't.

About This Book

The social influence marketing space is changing rapidly, so by very definition, this book can't be completely comprehensive. It does, however, aim to distill the core concepts, trends, tips, and recommendations down to bite-sized, easy-to-digest nuggets. As social influence marketing touches all parts of marketing and all parts of the Internet, too, (from traditional Web sites to social platforms to the mobile Web), based on your own experiences, you'll find some sections more valuable than others.

As you read this book, keep in mind that the way people influence each other online and impact purchasing and brand affinity decisions is similar to the way they've done for thousands of years in the real world. The technology is finally catching up, and social influence marketing is fundamentally about allowing and encouraging that behavior to happen in a brand-positive manner online, too.

This book helps you understand why social media matters to marketers and how you can harness it to directly impact your own marketing efforts in meaningful ways. Targeted at both marketers in large organizations and those of you who work in small businesses or run small businesses, it includes advice for every business scenario.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, here are some of the assumptions I came up with about you:

- ✓ You have a computer with Internet access.
- ✓ You've visited a social media site like Facebook or Twitter.
- ✓ You're working in marketing, want to join the marketing field, or are a small/medium business owner who has a stakeholder interest in the growth and reputation of your company.
- ✓ You have customers or prospective customers who use the Web frequently.
- ✓ You sell a product or service that you can market online.
- ✓ You're curious about social media and whether it changes marketing.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into three distinct parts. As you progress through the chapters, you move from learning the fundamentals of social influence marketing to practical strategies for implementing SIM programs and campaigns for your brand.

Part I: Getting Social with Your Marketing

A common misconception about social influence marketing is that it's fundamentally about marketing on social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and YouTube. But that's not the case, and Part I lays out the landscape of SIM, places it in the context of other forms of marketing, and then looks at the influencers you want to be reaching.

Part II: Putting SIM into Action

Part II is very much the practitioner's part. The chapters in this section also detail how you launch your SIM campaign, how you can encourage your employees to road test your SIM efforts, and how you can easily measure all your SIM efforts.

Part III: The Part of Tens

All *For Dummies* books feature some top ten lists and this book is no different. In this part, I list ten key SIM best practices that you must absolutely pay attention to. Also included are ten common mistakes — mistakes made by the best of us who have been practicing SIM time and again.

Icons Used in This Book

In the margins of the book, you'll find these icons helping you out:



Whenever I provide a hint that makes an aspect of social influence marketing easier, I mark it with a Tip icon.



The Remember icon marks paragraphs that contain a friendly reminder.



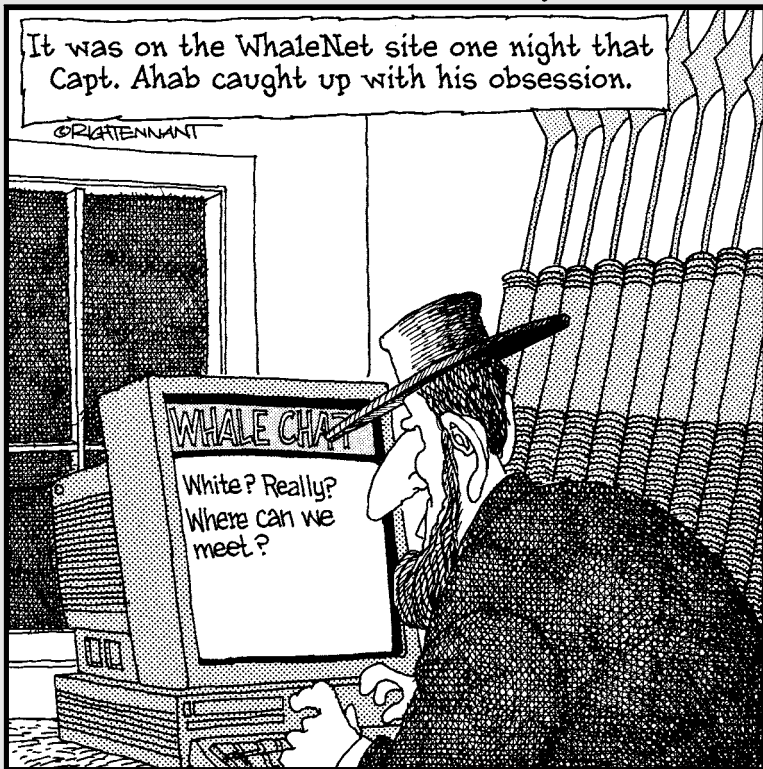
Heed the warnings marked with the Warning icons to avoid potential disaster.

Part I

Getting Social with Your Marketing

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



In this part . . .

I introduce you to SIM, and look at the platforms, both major (such as Facebook) and niche (like LinkedIn). I also discuss who the social influencers are, and how you can reach them.

Chapter 1

Understanding Social Influence Marketing

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding social media's role in social influence
- ▶ Knowing what types of influencers you're marketing to
- ▶ Coordinating your efforts with other types of marketing
- ▶ Moving beyond corporate marketing

When designing Web sites, you display banners and push your Web site listings higher up in the search engine rankings to promote and sell products. It's easy to forget how people actually buy. It's easy to assume that the potential customers are lonely people crouched over their computers late at night choosing what products to add to a shopping cart — isolated from the real world and their family and friends.

But in reality, that's not how people purchase online today. Although it might have been the case in the early days of the Web, those days are over now. Using the Internet has become a mainstream social activity. Consumers approach purchasing online differently, too, and as a result, you need to approach your marketing online differently as well. Your approach must incorporate social influence marketing.

This chapter discusses the fundamentals of social influence marketing: what it is, how it works, and what it means in the context of your other marketing efforts.

Defining Social Influence Marketing

A discussion of any subject needs to begin with a definition, and so here's the one for social influence marketing: *Social influence marketing* is a technique that employs *social media* (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and *social influencers* (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs.

The definition warrants further explanation. Social media refers to content created for and consumed by regular people. It includes the comments a person adds at the end of an article on a Web site, the family photographs he uploads to a photo-sharing site, the conversations he has with friends in a social network, and the blog posts that he publishes or comments on. That's social media, and it's making everyone in the world a content publisher and arbitrator. It's democratizing the Web. WordPress.com, shown in Figure 1-1, is one popular blogging platform.



Figure 1-1: Wordpress.com.

And then there are the social influencers. Are these people with special powers to influence a large majority of people? Not at all; rather, social influencers are the everyday people who influence the consumer as he makes a purchasing decision. Depending on the decision he's making, the social influencers may be a wife (or husband), friends, peers at work, or even someone the consumer has never even met in real life. Simply, the people who influence a brand affinity and purchasing decision are the social influencers. They may do this directly by rating products and commenting or by publishing opinions and participating in conversations across the Web. Anyone can be a social influencer, influencing someone else's brand affinity and purchasing decisions, and you, the reader, are probably one, too, without realizing it.

Social influence marketing is about recognizing, accounting, and tapping into the fact that as your potential customer makes a purchasing decision, he's influenced by various circles of people through the conversations that he has with them online, when he shares his own social media and consumes theirs.

But wait a minute. How does social influence marketing tie into social media marketing? These terms are increasingly used interchangeably, but it's worth noting that when talking about social influence marketing, the emphasis is on the social influencers versus social media, which invariably implies just marketing on the social platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Since this book covers marketing with social influencers and social media on both the social platforms and company Web sites and also emphasizes the importance of social influencers, I use the relatively newer term *social influence marketing* throughout the book.

Understanding the fundamentals of influence

To understand how social influence works, you need to look at how people are influenced in the real world, face to face. Social influence isn't something new. Long before the Web, people asked each other for advice as they made purchasing decisions. What one person bought often inspired another

to buy the same product, especially if the original purchaser said great things about the product. That's how human beings function; we're influenced and motivated by each other to do things. We're social beings, and sharing information on our experiences is all a part of social interaction.

Is influence bad? Of course not. More often than not, people seek that influence. People ask each other for advice; they share decision-making processes with friends and colleagues; they discuss their own experiences.

How much a person is influenced depends on multiple factors. The product itself is the most important one. When buying *low-consideration purchases* (those with a small amount of risk), people rarely seek influence, nor are they easily influenced by others. Buying toothpaste, for example, is a low-consideration purchase because each product may not be that different from the next one, and they're all fairly inexpensive — so you won't lose much money if you choose one that doesn't fit your needs. On the other hand, buying a new car is typically a *high-consideration purchase* (a purchase that includes a large risk). The price of the car, the maintenance costs, and its reputation for its safety all contribute to making it a high-consideration purchase. Social influence plays a much bigger role in car purchases than in toothpaste decisions.

Social influence matters with every purchase, but it matters more with high-consideration purchases than low-consideration ones. Most consumers realize that when they're making high-consideration purchases, they can make better and more confident purchasing decisions when they take into account the advice and experience of others who have made those decisions before them. That's how influence works.

Considering the types of influencers

When discussing social influence marketing, colleagues often ask me whether this means that they should add product review features to e-commerce Web sites or advertise on social networks. Yes, product reviews and advertising are important, but there's more to social influence than those two

things. When you think about social influence in the context of your marketing objectives, you must separate social influencers online into three types: referent, expert, and positional.

As a marketer seeking to deploy social influence marketing techniques, the first question to answer is this: Which social influencers sway your consumers as they make purchasing decisions about your product? After you identify those social influencers, you can determine the best ways to market to them.



Any major brand affinity or purchasing decision has referent, expert, and positional social influencers all playing distinct and important roles. Which one is most important may vary slightly based on the purchase, but the fact remains that you need to account for these three distinct types of social influencers in your marketing campaigns. If you're a marketer trying to positively affect a purchasing decision, you must market not just to the consumer but also to these influencers.

Referent influencers

A *referent influencer* is someone who participates on the social platforms. These users are typically in a consumer's social graph and influence brand affinity and purchasing decisions through consumer reviews, by updating their own status and Twitter feeds, and by commenting on blogs and forums. In some cases, the social influencers know the consumers personally.

Because the consumers know and trust their referent influencers, they feel confident that their advisers are also careful and punctilious. As they're people they trust, they value their advice and guidance over most other people. Referent influencers influence purchasing decision more than anyone else at the consideration phase of the marketing funnel, according to Fluent, the social influence marketing report from Razorfish.

For example, if I decide to make a high-consideration purchase, such as a car, I might start by going online and discussing different cars with a few friends in a discussion forum or on a social network. And then that weekend, I might meet those friends over coffee and carry on that discussion in person. This influence is considered *referent influence* because these friends sway me by the strength of their charisma and interpersonal skills, and they have this sway because I respect them.

Expert influencers

A consumer who's mulling over a high-consideration purchase might also consult an expert influencer. An *expert influencer* is an authority on the product that the consumer is considering purchasing. Also called *key influencers*, they typically have their own blogs, huge Twitter followings, and rarely know their audiences personally.

When I'm considering buying a car, suppose I don't turn just to friends for advice but also visit some car review Web sites. On these review Web sites, experts rate, rank, and pass judgment on cars. They're the expert social influencers — people who I may not know personally but are recognized as authorities in a certain field. Their influence is derived from the skills or expertise that they — or broadly speaking, their organization — possess based on training.

Positional influencers

A *positional influencer* is closest to both the purchasing decision and to the consumer. Called *peer influencers* sometimes, they are typically family members or part of the consumer's inner circle. They influence purchasing decisions most directly at the point of purchase and have to live with the results of their family member's or friend's decision as well.

Now I know that I can't make a high-consideration purchase like a car purchase without discussing it with my wife. Invariably, she'll drive the car, too, and sit in it as much as I will. It is as much her purchase as it is mine. Her opinion matters more than anyone else's in this case. She's closest to the purchasing decision and to the consumer and therefore has the most social influence.

Influencing on digital platforms

Each time people make purchasing decisions, they ask each other for advice. Sometimes, they depend upon an expert's guidance, and in other cases, that advice comes from people they know.

So why is influence such a big deal today? This is because Internet and social media consumption specifically have hit the mainstream. For example, as of February 2009, the social-networking phenomenon Facebook had 175 million users,

giving it a population larger than most countries. That's a lot of people talking about a lot of things (including products) to a lot of people!

People are making more and more purchasing decisions online every day. It's as natural to buy a product online as it is to go into a physical store. They buy clothes and shoes online, not to mention high-consideration items such as computers, cars (yes, cars), and jewelry. But that's not all. Not only are consumers buying online, but thanks to social media, they're conversing, socializing, and influencing each other online in a scale never seen before.

Call it a shift in Web behavior, but the way people make decisions in the real world is finally moving to the Internet in a big way. The social media platforms such as Facebook (shown in Figure 1-2), MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube are just a few of the places where people are asking each other for advice and guidance as they make purchasing decisions.

Smart companies are realizing that they should no longer design their e-commerce Web sites to convince buyers to make purchasing decisions in isolation. Rather they need to design the Web sites to allow consumers to bring their social influencers into the decision-making process. As consumers, people expect and want that because that's how they're used to making their purchasing decisions. So that's why social influence marketing matters today. People are influencing and are being influenced by each other every day on the social network platforms, community Web sites, and destination sites.

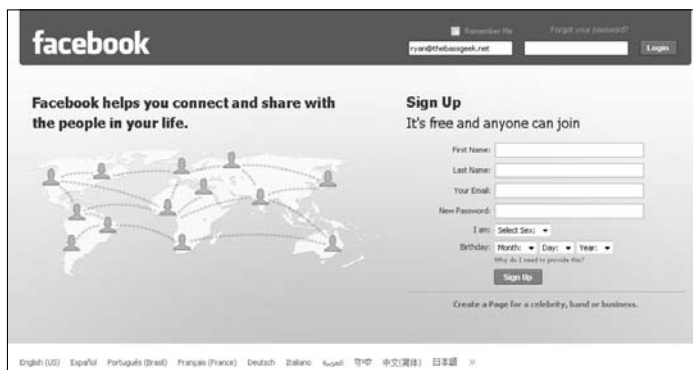


Figure 1-2: Facebook.



You may need to put a lot of effort into convincing your managers how important the social media platforms are. Many of them may feel that it's a youth phenomenon, one that doesn't serve the interests of brands well. The best way to communicate these ideas and techniques to your staff is by organizing lunch-and-learn sessions and bringing in external speakers who can walk your managers through the major social platforms and how best to market on them. Sharing case studies from other brands always resonates well and goes a long way to establishing credibility.

Comparing Social Influence Marketing with Other Marketing Efforts

It isn't enough to deploy social influence marketing (SIM) in isolation of every other marketing effort. If you do, you're sure to fail. Your customers will notice that you have a disjointed, conflicted story — depending on where and how you're interacting with them. Therefore, it's important to understand how you can integrate your social influence marketing within your other more traditional marketing — direct mail, public relations, display advertising, and promotions.



Some social influence marketing philosophies are in conflict with traditional public relations, media buying, direct mail, and promotions tactics. It's no use damning those forms of marketing and alienating your peers who focus on those areas. Put extra effort in partnering with your fellow employees as you practice these marketing techniques. Explain what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how it complements their efforts. If you discredit the other forms of marketing and the people behind them, it only hurts you in the long run.

Direct mail

Direct mail is about managing an active customer database and marketing to members of that database via circulars, catalogs, credit card applications, and other merchandising materials delivered to homes and businesses. You've probably gotten a lot of direct mail over the years — perhaps

mountains of it — and at some point, you’ve probably wished that these companies would stop mailing you. That’s all direct mail, and whether you like it or not, direct mail has been a very successful form of marketing. The catalog industry logs billions of dollars in sales because of it.

That will change with social influence marketing. Of all the areas of marketing, direct mail is one that will be most affected in the long run. Before you start worrying that your mail carrier will stuff your mailbox (or your e-mail inbox through e-mail marketing) even more than usual, consider this: Direct mail is most successful when the mail is targeted and personalized. That means it’s reaching the people who really care about the offers (or are most likely to take advantage of them), and it’s personalized toward the recipients’ needs in a voice and style that’s appealing to them. Pretty straightforward, isn’t it?

Direct mail is only as successful as the marketer’s customer database. The database should contain names and addresses of people who are open to receiving direct mail. But when people stop trusting the marketing efforts of large corporations and instead switch to each other for advice, that’s when direct mail loses its power.

Statistically, I know that consumers are now more likely to depend on each other for advice and information than they are on the corporations that are marketing to them. With consumers who are even more connected to each other through social media than before, it has gotten easier for them to reach out to one another for that advice. That means that when they see a piece of direct mail, they’re less likely to depend on it. They’d rather go online and ask a friend for advice or search for a product online than look at that flyer in the mail.

There’s another side to the story, though. The more data that you can capture about your customers through social influence marketing tactics, the more opportunities you have to feed your direct mail database. That’s just a factor of consumers doing more online, sharing more of themselves, and opting into direct mail efforts in exchange for information or acceptance into an online community. Your database may get richer with social influence marketing in the mix, but the value of it may decrease — although that doesn’t mean that

you can't use direct mail as a starting point to jump-start an online community, sustain interest in it, or reward participation through mailing coupons

Public relations

Among the earliest proponents of social media were digital-savvy public relations experts. Many of them entered this space by treating social media just as they have treated the mainstream media. These professionals equated *buzz* (how much people talk about a specific product or brand) in the social media realm with press mentions in the mainstream media. These PR experts identified the influential (*influence* defined as those having the most reach) bloggers and tweeters and started showering them with the same kind of attention that they had been bestowing on the mainstream media. They sent them press releases in advance, offered exclusive interviews, invited them to dinners, commented on their blogs, and carefully tracked how often their brands were mentioned and how positively.

For PR professionals, this approach made perfect sense. Arguably, they recognized early on how powerful social media could be and were among the first to track brand mentions and participate in conversations. In fact, many of the social media experts today are former public relations professionals who've taken the time to understand how social media works and how they can leverage it to support a company's or a brand's objectives. Many PR professionals also understand how bad press and traditional PR disasters can be amplified by social media if not addressed immediately.

But life isn't that simple, and the relationship between public relations and social media is a complex one — which is something that the savviest PR professionals understand and have always understood. Public relations is fundamentally about managing the press (mainstream or alternative) and pushing a company's agenda out to the press as much as possible. Whether it's the mainstream or alternative media, it doesn't matter. From a public relations professional's perspective, the press is the press, and they're only as good as their ability to amplify a company's message. That's where the problem lies.

When I look at social influence marketing and how it harnesses social media, some of its core tenets are in conflict

with public relations. For example, social influence marketing is about social influencers influencing each other through social media. The focus is on the social influencers influencing each other and not on the PR professionals influencing people in the social media realm. The difference is that as consumers, we're trusting and depending upon each other more for advice than on large corporations. The PR professionals, for all their sincerity and skill, will still push a company's message as forcefully as they can — and in that, it conflicts with social influence marketing.

Is there a remedy? Not necessarily, but as you deploy social influence marketing campaigns, be sensitive to the fact that your goals and aspirations may be in conflict with your PR organization if it hasn't embraced social media or social influence marketing. Have a conversation with them early on, find ways to collaborate and delineate boundaries, too — who does what, who reaches out to whom, and how much space is given to authentic social influencers to do the influencing versus the PR professionals. And as you do this, keep in mind that for many PR professionals, social influence marketing is an evolution of PR. That's a good thing providing for even more opportunities to collaborate.

Display advertising

When it comes to buying display advertising (also referred to as *media planning and buying*) on Web sites where your customers spend time, social influence marketing plays an important role. *Display advertising* is about identifying Web sites your target customers visit, buying ad space on those Web sites, and then measuring how much those ads are viewed and clicked upon. It's as much an art as it's a science because knowing which sites your customers visit, where they're most likely to engage with an advertisement (where on the site as well), whether the site charges the appropriate amount for the advertisement, and how much that advertising affects purchasing is not always easy. Trust me. I work with media buyers all the time, and their jobs are harder than you think.

But the display advertising space is important even in an economic downturn. The reason is simple: It's one of the most measurable forms of advertising, especially in relation to print

and television, along with search engine advertising. You can track who views the advertisement, what they do with it, and in some cases, whether they eventually buy the product based on that advertisement. It's no surprise that the relationship to social influence marketing is an important one as a result.

This relationship with social influence marketing takes various forms. Here are some of those connection points:

✓ **Market to the social influencers who surround the customer, as well as the customer.**

One of the ways in which you market to those influencers is using display advertising. So rather than just placing advertisements on Web sites that your customers visit, you place some advertisements (doesn't have to be a large percentage of your budget) on Web sites that their social influencers frequent, too. Is this as measurable as those advertisements targeting your customers directly? Maybe not, because these influencers are less likely to click the ads and make a purchase. But nevertheless, they remember the brand and they influence your customers.

✓ **Place display advertising on the social platforms — like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube — that your customers frequent.**

Most social platforms accept display advertising in some form, and this serves as an important part of their revenue model. Figure 1-3 shows display advertisements on YouTube.

Granted, display advertising on social platforms generally produces bad results (users don't notice the advertisements, and they don't click them) but the ad formats for social platforms are still evolving. One example is *appvertising*, where advertisements are placed within applications that reside on social networks. These produce better results. Another innovation is where consumers are asked to rate the ads that they're viewing. This helps the platform target ads more appropriately to them in the future.

✓ **Use interactive, social advertising.**

Think about this scenario for moment: You visit a major Web site like CNN.com and see a large advertisement on

the right side. The advertisement asks you a question, and you're invited to respond to that question from within the ad unit. What's more, you can see other responses to the question within the ad unit. That's an example of the ad unit becoming a platform for a social conversation. There aren't too many examples of social ads online, but I'm seeing more companies experiment in this space. Figure 1-4 shows how one ad appears on CNN.com.

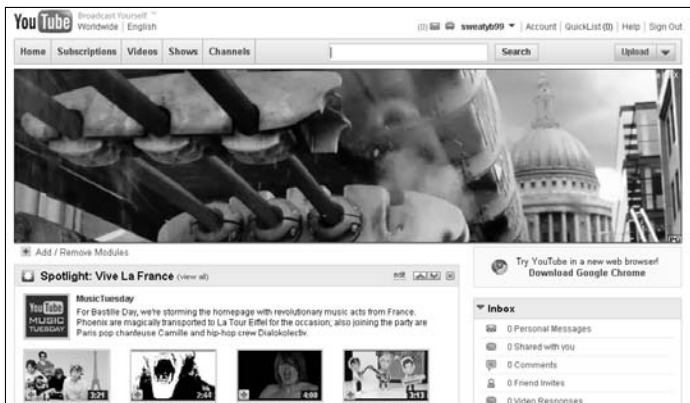


Figure 1-3: Placement ads on YouTube.

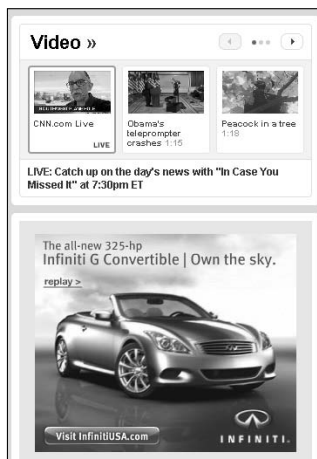


Figure 1-4: Advertising on CNN.com.

Promotions

Promotions are another important type of marketing activity that's affected by social influence marketing, due to the fact that as people communicate with each other more, they have less time to participate in product promotions. But it also presents unique opportunities for marketers to put the potential of social influence marketing to good use.

Consider this: Promotions are primarily about incentives that are designed to stimulate the purchase or sale of a product in a given period. Promotions usually take the form of coupons, sweepstakes, contests, product samples, rebates, and tie-ins. Most of these promotions are designed as one-off activities linking the marketer to specific customers. However, by deploying social influence marketing concepts, you can design promotions that require customers to draw in their social influencers, whether it's to participate in the contest or sweepstakes with them or to play an advisory role. By designing the promotion to require social influencer participation (it needs to be positioned as friends participating), the specific promotion may get a lot more attention than it normally would have. I discuss this in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2

Marketing via Niche Networks and Online Influencers

In This Chapter

- ▶ Knowing the niche platforms that matter
- ▶ Handling online community fragmentation
- ▶ Letting influencers set the agenda

Throughout this book, I discuss social influence marketing on the major social platforms: what you can do on the paid side of the equation as well as on the unpaid or earned media end. Still, much more social activity is happening online beyond Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Twitter that needs to be accounted for. Industry insiders believe that in the coming years, greater fragmentation will happen as user-generated content flows more seamlessly between the major social platforms and the rest of the Internet.

In this chapter, I discuss the social platforms beyond Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Twitter. I introduce these other social platforms, help you identify which ones are most appropriate for your marketing needs, and guide you through the process of determining how best to market on them.

Exploring the Niche Social Networks

So what are these niche social platforms that I'm talking about? Table 2-1 outlines the top 20 social networking platforms as of February 2009 from comScore, a marketing research company. Keep in mind that although this categorization uses the term *social networks* very loosely, it still excludes user-generated content (UGC) video sites such as YouTube and community platforms like Ning (www.ning.com).

Table 2-1 The Top 20 Social Networking Platforms

<i>Social Networking Platform</i>	<i>Feb 2009 Unique Visitors (000)</i>	<i>Year Over Year Percentage of Change</i>
MySpace	70,303	3
Facebook	57,375	77
Classmates	16,247	24
MyLife	15,345	N/A
Buzznet	8,661	66
Yahoo! Buzz	7,955	169
AOL Community	7,261	9,513
LinkedIn	6,948	110
AIM Profiles	6,928	-13
Digg	6,917	25
Bebo	5,789	N/A
Tagged	5,396	217
deviantART	4,770	29
Twitter	4,033	1,085
Hi5	3,670	35
CaringBridge	2,483	45
BlackPlanet	2,381	17
Gaia	2,325	38
AddThis	2,020	396
SodaHead	1,801	132

Arguably, by studying the monthly unique visitors and growth rates of these social platforms, you may wonder whether calling them niche platforms is even appropriate. They still have millions of unique visitors each month and, barring few exceptions, appear to be growing at a relatively brisk pace. For many people, these social platforms are more valuable and personal than MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube.

Here's why I categorize them as niche platforms: Their size or growth rate still pales in comparison to that of the four major social platforms. These networks are typically more narrowly focused (for example, LinkedIn is for professionals and Classmates is for alumni relationships) and, in some cases, they serve as platforms only for the aggregation and distribution of social media and are less focused on the social graph.



But here's a tricky fact: When you look at the major social platforms through the lens of your target customers, you may discover that they're not spending that much time on them. It is even possible that their time spent on a niche platform or cumulatively on several niche platforms exceeds time spent on the major platforms. It becomes apparent that you need to be focusing as much attention on these niche platforms (even though there are many more of them) as you do on Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Twitter.

Finding the Right Social Platforms

If I were to start a new business, it would probably be a business that, through some magic formula, would tell marketers which social platforms their specific customers are spending most of their time in a given month, with guidance on how to reach them. I would probably make a fortune for the simple reason that it's hard to find these customers beyond the major social platforms.

It's easy to learn the paid and unpaid marketing solutions on the second rung social platforms. (They're listed in Table 2-1.) What about the rest? How do you as a marketer beginning to apply social influence marketing know where your customers are spending their time? Making your job even harder is the

fact that you can't just focus on the social networks: You need to look more broadly at the video Web sites, the mainstream media Web sites, the blogger networks, and social media publishing tools that are all beginning to incorporate social functionality.

To help you identify the social platforms, I'm going to share a four-step process for identifying the right social platforms on which to find your customers. But before I do that, I'd like to classify the social platforms into a more meaningful segmentation.

Classifying the social platforms

As of this writing, there are four *major social platforms*:

- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ MySpace
- ✓ YouTube
- ✓ Twitter

I classify them as the four major platforms based on their overall size and the growth rate. When you're marketing to a mass-market audience, you simply cannot ignore these platforms.



It's just a matter of time before the major media and entertainment sites incorporate so much social functionality that they'll be considered social platforms too. In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* already includes a community section and *BusinessWeek* runs Business Exchange (<http://bx.businessweek.com>), an online community to share relevant content among like-minded professionals.

Next come the *niche social platforms*. These are the ones that have a narrower focus, whether that's driven by the subject matter, the audience reached (Facebook, for example, only reached college students once upon a time), their overall size, or their core focus. LinkedIn, CafeMom, and deviantART are good examples. These platforms succeed by defining a sharp niche and owning it.

The *social platform infrastructure providers* are a separate category too. These infrastructure providers allow users to create their own social networks or blogging environments on them. Ning (www.ning.com) and Gather (www.gather.com) are among the most popular of these platforms, allowing people to set up social networks that behave similarly to the way a MySpace or Facebook behaves, with member pages, community areas, and activity streams. Vox (www.vox.com) and Blogger (www.blogger.com) are other successful infrastructure providers too.

Finally, you have the *blogosphere*. Blogs rarely have any formal or technical relationship with each other, but they behave cohesively from time to time thanks to trackbacks, commenting, and the reciprocal linking that goes on between them. Blogs received 77.7 million unique visitors in the U.S. in August 2008 alone, according to comScore, and traffic to them continues to increase. In fact, four of the top ten entertainment sites are blogs.



You need to look for your customers on the major social platforms, the niche social platforms, the social infrastructure providers, and across the blogosphere, too.

Understand your customers

To discover where your customers are spending their time online, you need to begin by understanding them better. Depending upon their *socio-technographics* (which means how your customers engage on the social platforms), they might be spending a lot of time on the major social platforms or very little. The first step in understanding them is to determine their participation levels in the social Web.

The freely available Forrester Social Technographics Tool allows you to profile your customers' social computing behavior. All you have to do is select the age range, country, and gender of the people you want to research. The tool then returns an analysis of your customers, dividing them up into creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactives. The tool currently includes only 11 countries, but that number is sure to increase over time. It is a useful starting point for understanding your customers. You can find the tool at www.forrester.com/Groundswell/profile_tool.html.

Quantcast (www.quantcast.com) is a useful tool to understand the audience profile of someone using a social platform. Just type the Web site address of the social platform, and the tool returns demographics information for that Web site. In some cases, it may even go deeper and include user segmentation responses as well.

The third form of research (and my favorite way) is to actually talk to your customers. Conduct social influence research to discover how they use the Web, whether they socialize online, where that takes place, and how their friends and networks influence them. Even a small sample of users can yield a lot of valuable information about their online behaviors and the social platforms that they're engaging on. Often, the best way to do that is to ask interviewees to come in for the interviews with a few friends and observe them interact with each other. You can then supplement this in-person form of research with site surveys to get statistically significant results.

And then of course, you can also research what consumers are saying online about the product, company, or brand. Don't ignore peeking into these conversations, as sometimes it's more insightful than any other form of research.



Social behavior online is changing at a rapid pace, so consider putting an ongoing social research program in place. The ways your customers use the social Web probably change every three to six months. You want to be ahead of those changes, so ongoing research is important.

Research the platforms

Just as it is extremely important to understand your customers and where they're spending their time online, and with whom, it's extremely important to research the social dynamics of the various social platforms. It's no use proposing a social influence marketing strategy that covers YouTube if you don't really know how marketers can and are allowed to use YouTube. Nor will your marketing efforts be a success if those marketing efforts, even if YouTube allows them, are out of sync with how users expect to use that social platform.

I discuss how you can market on the major social platforms, covering Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter, but there's more to the social Web than those platforms. Knowing what is permissible and appropriate for the other social platforms can be a tricky. There aren't any hard and fast rules and the advertising industry is just beginning to establish guidelines, advertising formats, and best practices.



Keep an eye on the Social Media Subcommittee of the Interactive Advertising Bureau (www.iab.net/member_center/councils_committees_working_groups/committees/social_media_committee), which is currently working to define best practices for advertising in social media. Expect to see valuable recommendations from them in the near future. Also watch the Social Media Advertising Consortium (www.smac.org), which includes representatives from agencies, brands, and publishers. It's focusing on defining standards for ad units, a common vocabulary, and best practices.

Although a lot of the marketing tactics on the social platforms are still in their infancy, a few practices and standards are starting to emerge. These can be classified as follows:

- ✓ **Traditional display advertising:** Think of these as display banners that you see elsewhere across the Internet. These banner ads generally have cookie-based behavioral and other forms of targeting overlaid on top of them. They're sold and measured as traditional display banners are (primarily through CPMs, or cost per impressions, and CTRs, or click-through rates).
- ✓ **Social advertisements:** These ad formats bring a person's social graph into the ad unit itself, encouraging engagement (imagine if you saw a friend's photograph in an advertisement) or pushing similar advertisements to friends of a person who clicked a specific advertisement. Sometimes these social advertisements include user-generated content and are targeted based on browsing patterns of friends in a network.
- ✓ **Sponsorships:** Drawing inspiration from the advertorials of print publishing, these ad formats encourage bloggers specifically to discuss certain topics. You can establish

specific rules governing what can be blogged about, but the bloggers have a lot of freedom too. When you see these posts, they're typically marked as sponsored ones. Sponsorships are becoming more popular on Twitter, too, although, keep in mind that some bloggers find pay per post formats and incentives distasteful.

- ✓ **Influencer marketing:** Social platforms like CafeMom give you access to influencers who are given assignments to perform and then discuss the results on their blogs or their social platforms. For example, Kohl's gave CafeMom influencers gift cards and opportunities to explore their favorite colors at Kohl's stores. Each mom then returned to the site and wrote about their shopping experiences.
- ✓ **Widgets and applications:** Several social platforms allow the creation, launch, and seeding of widgets and applications on their platforms. You can either sponsor popular widgets or create new utilitarian or entertainment ones that fulfill a specific purpose for the users and have a tie-in with a brand. When launched, these widgets are promoted by the social platform and typically include a media buy as well. Sponsored music players on MySpace and myYearbook (www.myyearbook.com), for example, are becoming quite common.
- ✓ **Brand pages:** Just as the major social platforms allow for the creation of brand pages, so too do the other social platforms. These may differ in functionality and purpose based on the platform, but they're all virtual homes where you can promote your products, showcase your latest advertising, and launch promotions and contests. They can often include games, screensavers, desktop backgrounds, iconography, and the ability to recruit fans.
- ✓ **Gifting:** Mimicking Facebook's extremely successful gifting program, more and more niche social platforms offer gifting-related advertising. You can offer users gifts, such as a virtual birthday cake or chocolates, that they can share with their friends. The gifts are extremely viral, and the advertising buy runs out once the gifts have.
- ✓ **Other promotional opportunities:** Most niche social platforms offer other similar related branding opportunities. These include sponsoring different parts of the social platform, or sponsoring applications, polls, and contests.

Other opportunities include pairing members together to accomplish tasks, sharing database information for remarketing and customer research purposes, and social merchandising.



Advertising formats for the social Web are in a state of flux. New ad formats are emerging just as old ones are being retired. The rules for advertising on the Internet are changing too as a result. The advertising formats by definition cannot be totally comprehensive.



If you're looking for guidance on blogger outreach and are worried about harassing bloggers and losing their support, take a look at The Ogilvy Blogger Outreach Code of Ethics (<http://rohitbhargava.typepad.com/weblog/2007/09/the-ogilvy-blog.html>). It includes some excellent recommendations.

RFP the vendors

After you've decided which social platforms are appropriate for your target audience and have a sense of what can be accomplished on them, consider issuing requests for proposals (RFPs). It may become a time consuming effort but it helps you in the long run. The RFPs matter if your marketing effort is going to exceed \$7,500. If you're planning on spending less on your marketing efforts, it may be better to use the cheaper, less sophisticated, self-service tools provided by the major social platforms. Here are some pointers to consider when issuing RFPs:

✓ **Describe your objectives explicitly.**

The social platforms are vying for your business. The more explicit and specific you can be about your marketing and campaign objectives, the more the social platforms can provide a response that meets your needs. Don't shy away from telling them exactly what they need to know. This means describing your audiences in incredible detail too. You're fundamentally looking to match your audiences with theirs and build engagement around it. Some social platforms are invariably a better fit than others.

✓ **Be clear about your benchmarks for success.**

The social platforms need to understand how you're going to measure the success of your marketing efforts. It's important to be very clear about those benchmarks, as you'll probably be holding the platforms to them as well. Most social platforms (as well as other publishers on the Internet) would rather know how they're going to be measured before participating in an RFP. Accordingly, a few of them may even choose to drop out of the process. They're always more interested in a long-term mutually beneficial relationship than a one-off partnership that hurts their credibility.

✓ **Recognize that you're getting free advice.**

When you're issuing a request for proposals you're asking the social platforms to prove why they're the right places for you to market. But not only are you getting their credentials, you are also getting a lot of great ideas too. As a result, it's important to be completely fair and transparent during the RFP process. Even if you do not choose a specific platform, you're going to learn a lot from them while going through the RFP process. Furthermore, they'd have put a lot of time and effort into responding to the proposal. You owe it to them to be transparent, clear, and appreciative of their efforts. Providing feedback on why you didn't choose them when you can is also important.

✓ **Beware that you can be limited by who you RFP.**

When issuing RFPs, it's easy to forget that you're limiting yourself by whom you ask to participate in the RFP process. Therefore, choose carefully who you invite to participate in the RFP process. Make sure that you're casting a wide net and are including all the different types of platforms that may be able to help you achieve your marketing objectives.

For example, social platform vendors that provide appvertising solutions on Facebook, like Buddy Media (www.buddymedia.com) or Context Optional (www.contextoptional.com), may get left off of the RFP process because they're neither social platforms nor social platform infrastructure providers. They sit somewhere in between. The same applies to a social gaming company like Playfish (www.playfish.com), which provides some exciting opportunities for advertisers reaching specific audiences.

Evaluate and plan strategically

Planning is, of course, the most important step. As you plan your SIM campaign on a niche platform, you want to make sure that you're reaching the audiences that you want to and are engaging with them in an authentic, transparent, and meaningful fashion. Choosing the niche platform is always part art and part science. I've spent time discussing the science part of the question — how you find where your audiences are, what they're doing, and what tactics are most appropriate.

So now I want to look at the art piece of the equation. This means having an intuitive sense for the following items:

✓ **Knowing which social platforms can extend or strengthen your brand.**

You don't want your brand to be tightly associated with a social platform that has a mixed reputation.

✓ **Having a sense of which social platforms are on the verge of breaking out and growing in size and scale.**

Victoria's Secret Pink practiced SIM on Facebook in its early days and those efforts have paid off today. What's the next Facebook?

✓ **Being able to separate the wheat from the chaff.**

This matters especially with the niche social platforms. Because hundreds of them are out there, many of which have a lot of traffic, knowing which ones have meaningful social engagement and can help you achieve your marketing objectives can be tricky.

✓ **Thinking beyond audiences and reach.**

Traditional advertising online has always focused on audiences and where they are. But with social influence marketing, you have to think in terms of the influencers and the exponential value of their participation and engagement. Don't just use the traditional display banner metrics.

✓ **Being in it for the long run and not getting impatient.**

Social influence marketing requires patience: the patience to build relationships, to test, to learn and optimize, and to think beyond the confines of a campaign.

These philosophies apply all the more when you're practicing SIM on the niche platforms. They may not give you the results that you want on the first day or the first month or the first quarter, but they've been proven to showcase strong results over the long term.

✓ **Thinking holistically and strategically.**

Most importantly, think holistically about your social influence marketing efforts. Think about how you want your marketing efforts on the niche platforms to work with those on the major social platforms and on your own Web site too. Don't treat them all as separate, disjointed marketing efforts. They need to work together. And ideally, these marketing efforts should also be coordinated with offline marketing efforts too where one feeds the other.

Moving Beyond the Platforms and the Blogosphere

A discussion about marketing in the social Web would be incomplete without addressing the role that companies, which create new advertising opportunities on the social platforms, play. For lack of a better name, I call them social platform enhancers. They're not social platforms and do not have their own audiences. Nor are they advertising agencies or public relations firms who can help you market on the social platforms. Some of them function as advertising networks that sit on top of the social platforms, whereas others are more similar to software companies that build applications and widgets for the social platforms and the blogosphere. Regardless of how they fit into the social ecosystem, they play an important role and you can harness them for marketing purposes. In the next few sections, I discuss a few of the types of social platform enhancers.

Social advertising network

The first type of platform enhancer is the advertising network. Many of the most successful applications on Facebook belong to networks of applications that solicit advertising in a unified

fashion by aggregating audiences. Sometimes the network is just one application developer who owns and manages a series of extremely popular applications. In other cases, several application providers band together to form a network and solicit advertising. RockYou (www.rockyou.com) and Slide (www.slide.com) are the leading advertising networks that reside within Facebook and MySpace. Their Facebook and MySpace applications serve as a home for brand advertising. Through them, you can place branded ads, application promotions, and integrated sponsorships next to specific applications on those social platforms.

Appvertisement providers

In conjunction with the advertising network are the platform enhancers who build appVERTISEMENTS for brands. These *appVERTISEMENTS* combine the best of advertisements with useful or entertaining applications: hence the name *appVERTISEMENT*. These appVERTISEMENTS harness a person's social graph and are designed to provide meaningful value to users, often by having them contribute and personalize the application. This can be in the form of entertainment, information, or a utility that can sit within a social environment like a Facebook profile page. They're designed to be social in nature, encouraging people to install the application and have their friends install it too. These appVERTISEMENT providers work with your advertising agency to define and build the appVERTISEMENT and then guarantee a certain number of paid installations by leveraging the social advertising networks. Gigya (www.gigya.com), BuddyMedia (www.buddymedia.com), and ContextOptional (www.contextoptional.com) are all examples of appVERTISEMENT providers.

Blogger networks

Approximately 10 million active blogs are on the Internet, of which probably not more than 10,000 have significant traffic. But even reaching these bloggers can be challenging. It's a question of scale. As a marketer, you certainly don't have time to reach out to 10,000 bloggers yourself. This is where blogger networks enter the picture. Every day, more and more bloggers are organizing into blogger networks that represent them. The representatives align marketers with

the appropriate blogs, promote the blogger network, manage the relationships with the bloggers, and handle all advertiser relations. Many blogger networks also have dashboards that allow you to choose different advertising options by selecting audiences, specific topics, and blogs through which you want to market. The most important blogger network is probably Federated Media (www.federatedmedia.net), which represents probably 200–300 of the most influential blogs covering most topics. BlogHer (www.blogher.com) is another important blogger network, representing women bloggers. Six Apart (www.sixapart.com) also has a very active blogger network. In the case of Six Apart, as with Technorati, their blogger networks represent blogs that reside on their own platforms. Some of the other blogger networks include PayingPost (www.payingpost.com), BuzzLogic (www.buzzlogic.com), and Adphilia (www.adphilia.com).

Taking Care of the Unpaid Media Basics

No marketing effort on the niche platforms is complete if you ignore all the possibilities on the unpaid side of the equation too. The social platforms, which depend on advertising as revenue, may not always be keen for you to deploy these tactics.

In the following sections, I discuss some tactics to consider in the unpaid realm.



These platforms afford the opportunity and as long as you're not disrupting the platforms, breaking any privacy rules, or irritating the users on them, these tactics are fair game.

Wikipedia

You should always research how your company or brand is represented on Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), which is the free encyclopedia that anybody can edit. When you do find your company page, don't pepper it with marketing-speak. The page will just be reedited to the original version.

Instead, read the page carefully and correct any misrepresentations. Shy away from promoting your company or products. Instead, point to complimentary articles. In fact, most social media professionals believe that you should never edit your own Wikipedia page, as it may be considered a clear conflict of interest. Those professionals encourage brands to comment only on the discussion tab.

Flickr

This photo sharing Web site (www.flickr.com) is starting to act and feel more and more like a social network. You'll want to search your brand and company name on it to see what photographs are associated with your company. If photographs have been uploaded by someone else and tagged with your company name, you just have to live with them. However, you can also publish your own corporate and product imagery so that users know your own digital photography. I recommend setting up an official company account to share photographs, run contests, and encourage others to publish photographs, too.

Delicious

This bookmarking site (www.delicious.com) is extremely popular: Consumers use it to store their Web site bookmarks and to find other useful Web sites. All that you have to do here is make sure that your corporate Web site and any brand or product sites that you may have are bookmarked and tagged with your company name.

Digg

Here's another site (www.digg.com) that looks and feels like a social network but isn't. Digg is fundamentally a user-powered news aggregator. Each time you have an interesting piece of news to share about your company or product, publish it to Digg. Depending upon its newsworthiness, it may get voted to the top of a category, giving you an immense amount of free publicity.

Message boards

Regardless of how you use the social platforms, you'll want to know what conversations are happening on the message boards about your company and brand. The best way to do this is to use a service like BoardReader (www.boardreader.com) to scan the message boards for you. Here again, how you participate depends on the specific message board, the type of discussion, and whether you have to deal with a factual error, slander, or just category information. You'll have to make the judgment call for yourself.

Chapter 3

Accounting for the Influencers

In This Chapter

- ▶ Nurturing the social influencers
- ▶ Differentiating between influencers
- ▶ Harnessing a customer's social graph
- ▶ Discovering best practices for reaching influencers

In Chapter 1, I briefly introduce the social influencers and how they affect purchasing decisions. In this chapter, I discuss social influencers in greater detail and explain why they matter, how you can reach them, and what best practices to deploy in the process of doing so. I focus on the social influencers who reside within the social graphs of your customers and how you can account for them in all your marketing efforts. Some of the concepts in this chapter rightly seem to draw inspiration from influencer marketing, with its roots in the public relations world, whereas other concepts will feel very different.

Knowing the Expert Influencers

How influencers are defined is a controversial subject among marketers. Some marketers focus on what they consider to be key influencers, whereas others place more emphasis on everyday influencers.

Earlier, I introduce the three types of social influencers, which I believe account for all the types of influence taking place around a customer. Here's a quick recap of them.

- ✓ **Referent influencers** are in a friend's social graph, but they may not be tightly connected with the user.
- ✓ **Positional influencers** are that inner circle around the user and often have to live with the choices of the purchasing decision.
- ✓ **Expert influencers** are considered authorities in the specific domain or are people whom others depend upon for information and advice. They do a lot to build awareness and affect purchasing decisions at the consideration stage.

I'm now going to delve further into the social influencer categories, starting with the expert influencers.

The *Word of Mouth Marketing Association Handbook* explains that there are five types of influencers who you need to account for. When you think of expert influencers, be sure to cover these five types:

- ✓ People in formal positions of authority
- ✓ Individuals or institutions that are recognized as subject matter experts
- ✓ Media elites (journalists, commentators, and talk show hosts)
- ✓ Cultural elites (celebrities, artists, and musicians)
- ✓ Socially connected individuals (neighborhood leaders, members of community groups, online networks, and business networkers)

You can find out more about the Word of Mouth Marketing Association, shown in Figure 3-1, at www.womma.org.

As you scan the preceding list, three thoughts might cross your mind:

- ✓ **Your PR department is already taking care of this.**

The first is that your public relations department is probably concerned with these expert influencers and is already developing relationships with them. That's good news and it should be encouraged. The question to ask your PR department is whether they're nurturing the relationships with these expert influencers online via all the social platforms on which these expert influencers have set up

a presence. It's not enough to know what the expert influencers are doing and saying in the physical world — you need to track their activity, commentary, and points of view online too. And most importantly, you need to build relationships with these influencers online as well.

✓ **You're not sure these influencers matter online.**

The second thought that might cross your mind is that you don't know their relative importance to each other. You may also wonder whether you *do* need to track their online activities. If you're a marketer in a small business or maybe a CEO in a small business that doesn't have a formal marketing department, you may wonder whether it is even possible to develop a relationship with these expert influencers online. Will they even care what you think? Will they even respond to your tweets, Facebook friend requests, and prodding e-mails? Those are all valid questions.

✓ **You have the wrong list of influencers.**

The final thing you may wonder about is whether you even have the right list of expert influencers. Thanks to the excesses of several mammoth corporations, we now live in an age where trust in formal authority is at an all-time low. An April 2009 article in *The Economist* emphasized that consumers are increasingly distrusting big business and are turning to each other for advice. The experts that your consumers depended upon when making purchasing decisions two years ago may not be the very same experts that they are looking towards today.



Figure 3-1: The Word of Mouth Marketing Association.

What does all this mean? Quite simply, it means that you must begin by analyzing who are the expert influencers affecting brand affinity and purchasing decisions for your consideration set. They may be all the people that your PR department is currently tracking, but that list of people may have changed too. You need to know who these expert influencers are, where they are active online, whether it is feasible to even develop a relationship with them on the social platforms in which they are participating, and, finally, how much influence they actually have.



Other departments within your company may already have relationships with the expert influencers. That's a good thing. Find out whether existing relationships are in place before knocking on the doors of the expert influencers. They certainly don't want to be harassed by multiple people from one company.

Reaching the Expert Influencers

Different strategies exist for reaching and activating the expert influencers. How you reach them varies based on who they are, what you want them to accomplish, and where you think you have the best chance of establishing a relationship with them. This could be by introducing yourself to them at conferences, replying to their tweets, commenting on their blog posts, or friending them in Facebook. It all depends. The good news is that influencers like to influence and, as long as you have a promising value proposition, they will at the very least listen to you.

Keep in mind that nurturing expert influencers is an investment in the long term and you may not always get the response you want from them immediately. Also remember that influencers draw their strength and importance from being unbiased, independent, and credible. Don't ask them to compromise that position.



Expert influencers like to be in the know. Provide them with exclusive sneak peeks and they'll be grateful for the opportunity to see and talk about your product before anyone else does. You can use that access to information to deepen your relationship with them.

Reaching the expert influencers may be easy depending upon your industry, the size of your business, and the product you are selling. But for other marketers, that may not be the case. For example, if you're a marketer for a small business, reaching expert influencers is going to be even harder because these people may not be high-profile or visible. You'll have to really seek them out. Here are some tips for reaching expert influencers:

✓ **Ask your customers whom they seek out for advice.**

There is little in marketing that beats first-hand customer research, and the same applies to social influence marketing. You can identify and reach the expert influencers by asking your consumers who they are and where they spend their time.

✓ **Pay attention to the media.**

Keep an eye out for the experts who are quoted frequently by the media when your product or category is discussed. Also keep an eye out for who appears on television. Make a list of these experts and use that list as a basis to research their influence.

✓ **Look at your competitive environment.**

Your competitors, suppliers, and business partners probably seek out the experts just as you do. In many cases, these experts sit on the advisory boards of other companies that operate in your space. Understand who these people are. A lot of that information is freely available online.

✓ **Attend conferences and exhibitions.**

The expert influencers are often called upon to give keynote addresses to industry conferences, lead seminars, and pass judgment on new products and services at exhibitions. Pay attention to these people at those events.

✓ **Seek out the industry analysts.**

The analysts often have an outsized influence on customers in your product category. Their influence increases dramatically in the business-to-business space, where customers depend upon them for advice when making large-scale purchasing decisions. Pay attention to them and to what they have to say.

✓ Evaluate their online footprint.

Tools like Technorati (www.technorati.com, shown in Figure 3-2) rank all blogs based on the number of inbound links to them. Search the rankings by your product category and see which independent blogs rank high. Those bloggers are expert influencers to develop a relationship with. Use other professional tools for the rankings, such as the Alexa scores (www.alexa.com), the Google PageRank, the number of RSS subscribers (often listed on the blog itself), and proprietary technology like the influencer identification ones from Collective Intellect (www.collectiveintellect.com).

✓ Become an influencer yourself.

Sometimes there's no better way to influence than to become an influencer yourself. Seek out leadership positions in your community and in your industry by joining trade groups and industry associations. You'll become an influencer and will get access to other influencers.

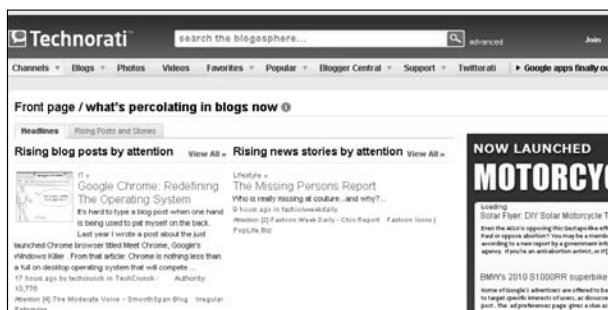


Figure 3-2: The Technorati home page.

Tapping into the Referent Influencers

Until recently, there was no way to reach referent influencers. In fact, in conversations about influencers, there'd be no mention of the referent influencers because they couldn't be identified and therefore were not even thought about. Marketers

had no way of identifying them, tracking their behavior, or marketing towards them specifically. For all practical purposes, they did not exist. That's now changed because consumers connect with their friends and make their social graphs available through the social networks.

Social graphs are commonly defined as the global mapping of everyone in the world and how they are related to each other. When I refer to an individual's *social graph*, I'm referring to who is mapped to that individual and how he relates to that individual. Referent influencers are people in your friendship circle, such as your high school friends or people you've become friendly with at work. You may be close to only a few of them, but you probably observe the activities of them all on your favorite social platform.

The holy grail of social influence marketing is increasingly considered the ability to identify which referent influencers are most powerful and have the highest impact on brand affinity and purchasing decisions. After you've identified them, the next question is, how does a marketer reach these referent influencers that surround their customers? They matter because it has been statistically proven that networked neighbors (or those consumers linked to prior customer) adopt the service or product at rates three to five times greater than baseline groups. The research also shows that these network neighbors impact purchasing decisions very directly too.

The referent influencers themselves break down into two categories, which I cover next, and it is important to differentiate between the two.

Anonymous referent influencers

These are everyday people who are extremely active on the social platforms and blog, upload, comment, rate, and share much more than other consumers who share their same demographics. By virtue of the volume of their activity on the various social platforms, the anonymous referent influencers carry weight. Your customers probably don't think of them as experts, but they do notice what these people are doing online.

Known referent influencers

These are the everyday people who reside specifically within the social graphs of your customers and are known to your customer. The best way to think about this group is to consider your high school class. Of the approximately 300 kids who may have been in the class, there were probably 10 or 15 who everyone else looked up to and followed. These are the cool kids who everyone wanted to be like even though they may not have known them well. These are the referent influencers.

Marketing to the referent influencers is all about knowing who they are, the weight they carry, whether they reside within your customer's social graph, and how to reach and activate them to influence your customer.

Reaching the Referent Influencers

Referent influencers are not that easily reached. Most social platforms do not allow marketers to mine the social graphs of their users, so identifying these people and reaching them can be challenging. As a result, it can be difficult to identify these referent influencers and activate them.

But there's good news too. Some enterprising advertising technology companies have been researching ways to reach these referent influencers without compromising the privacy of your customers or their circle of friends. Reaching the referent influencers through these methods is safe and reliable, although it does cost you money, with the amount depending on how many referent influencers you're trying to reach. In the next few sections, I discuss how these companies help you reach the referent influencers.



Not all tactics for reaching referent influencers need to be paid for. Your company's Facebook page can be a great place to build a community and encourage referent influencers to influence your customers by incentivizing them with competitions, coupons, and special offers. Your customers who fan your Facebook page will probably bring their referent influencers to the page too if you give them incentives to do so.

Social graph analysis

Using database technologies, companies can crawl the major social networks in a similar fashion to the way the search engines crawl the Internet's Web pages. These companies can create a mapping of users and how they relate to each other on the major social platforms. They can also capture personality attributes of the users, the number of friends they have, how active they are on a social platform, and whether their friends respond to actions that they take. Companies in this space include Unbound Technologies (www.unboundtechnologies.com) and Rapleaf (www.rapleaf.com), which use metrics like friend count, social persuasion track record, and *influence context measurement* (meaning how the subject matter affects influence) to identify the influencers.

These advertising technology companies map your e-mail database against their social graph database to determine the overlapping customers and to identify the influential ones from the mix. That serves as a starting point for you to then market to the referent influencers and encourage them to talk about a brand.

A place to get started creating your own social graph is with Google's Social Graph API, as shown in Figure 3-3, at <http://code.google.com/apis/socialgraph>. This lets you add social functionality to your own Web site encouraging your friends and customers to join the mini-social network.

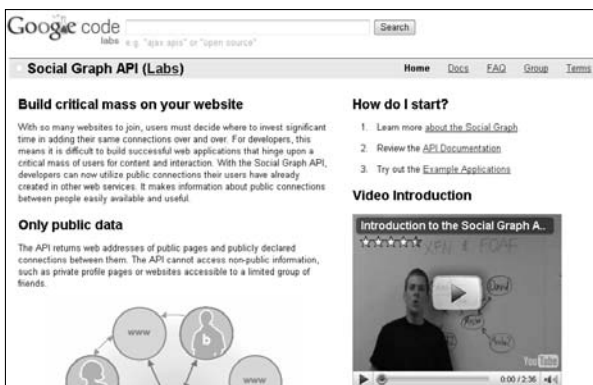


Figure 3-3: Google's Social Graph API page.

Cookie data

Other technology companies analyze cookie data to infer the relationships between people and target similar advertising to them both. If one set of users responds well to the advertisements, they then present the same advertisements to other similar people or to the friends of the original group in similar social networks, conversations, or Web sites as the original set of users. It allows for your advertising to reach anonymous referent influencers. Keep in mind here that this applies only if you have an advertising budget and are advertising online. Otherwise, you won't be able to take advantage of the cookie data. Two companies that focus on this are 33Across (www.33across.com) and Media6Degrees (www.media6degrees.com).

Web site behavior

You can do a lot on your Web site to allow for the referent influencers to converge and positively influence each other. From the most basic of solutions, like implementing customer reviews, to creating discussion forums where customers can talk about issues of concern, your Web site can be a destination where people congregate and talk to each other. Recent developments like Facebook Connect address how you can more directly enable your prospective customers to bring their referent influencers to your Web site.

Once you've identified these referent influencers, be sure to give them the best possible service if they're customers as well. Not only will you increase the sales from them but you'll also increase sales among the people that they influence directly. As a recent *Huffington Post* article pointed out, American Express gives its influencers (who they identify by how much they spend) a distinct credit card with special benefits that include a concierge service and first-class upgrades.

Use this group to improve your products and services, too. They're typically people who have strong opinions, care about the products, and want to impact product design. Ask their opinions — or at the very least, share new products with

them — before you do so with anyone else. Similarly, also consider giving them special discounts and coupons and cultivate their loyalty by marketing to them with additional care.

Tapping into the Positional Influencers

Finally, there are the positional influencers. These are the people who are closest to your customers and influence them the most at the point of purchase. Because they are the people who have to live with the purchasing decision, they are the most vested in it too. But they're not celebrities, so they're not always noticeable and can be the hardest to find. They're important, but marketing to them can be similarly difficult.

What makes tapping into the positional influencers harder still is the fact that how big a role they play in a purchasing decision varies dramatically by the purchase. For example, if I were to buy a desk for my apartment, my wife (arguably the most important positional influencer in my life) would have a huge impact on the purchasing decision. Her opinions would heavily influence where I shop and what I choose. On the other hand, if I were purchasing a laptop for professional use, she'd play a much smaller role in the purchasing decision. This is because the choice doesn't impact her significantly and the product isn't of interest to her even though it's a high consideration purchase.



Without a doubt, positional influencers are important. Identifying them can be challenging, as can developing an understanding of the weight they may carry.



Sometimes it may be hard to separate the referent influencers from the positional influencers, especially when you're marketing on a social platform. In those cases, it doesn't matter as much. What matters is that your customers should be provided incentives to bring their influencers to you so that you can market to them as well. Focus on that, and the right influencers will get influenced, and then they'll do the influencing for you!

The following sections cover tips to allow for positional influencers to play the role they normally do best.

Understand the circles of influence around your customers

Most important is to understand who will be most impacted by the purchasing decisions of your customers. That alone will tell you who the positional influencers are and how important their influence is. For example, with first-time car purchases, family members are very important positional influencers because they'll be riding in the car and, in some cases, driving it too.

Let consumers shape and share the experience

It may be hard for you to reach those positional influencers, but your customers will reach them for you. Make sure that your e-commerce Web site or even your campaign-centric microsite allows for the sharing of content and posting to Facebook and other social platforms. Let the consumers shape and share the experiences in any format that they want. Make it easy for customers to pluck information off your Web site and carry it elsewhere and to their positional influencers.

Articulate your product benefits for multiple audiences

You probably always assume that you're selling a product to your target customer, ignoring the fact that social influencers play a big role in the purchasing decision. If you know who the influencers are, articulate your product benefits so that they resonate with the influencers too. To go back to car purchases once more: If you're selling a car to a college student demographic, tout the safety benefits because the students' parents will most probably be involved in the purchasing decision. Don't ignore them.

Fish where the fish are

This is becoming a cliché in social influence marketing, but the point holds strongest in the context of positional influencers.

As these influencers are the hardest to find yourself, you need to make sure that you're marketing and selling your products where these positional influencers probably influence your customers. So it goes without saying that you need to have a deep presence on all the social platforms where your customers and their influencers are congregating. But it also means that you need to design your Web site or your presence on the social platforms to encourage your customers to reach out to those positional influencers. You need to include the basic ShareThis functionality that lets a user take product information from your Web site and socialize it with her influencers. You can start by allowing users to share your Web site info with ShareThis at www.sharethis.com (Figure 3-4).

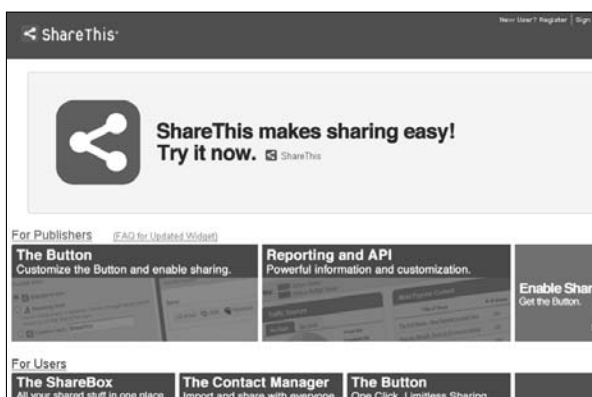


Figure 3-4: The ShareThis home page.

Badges and promotions

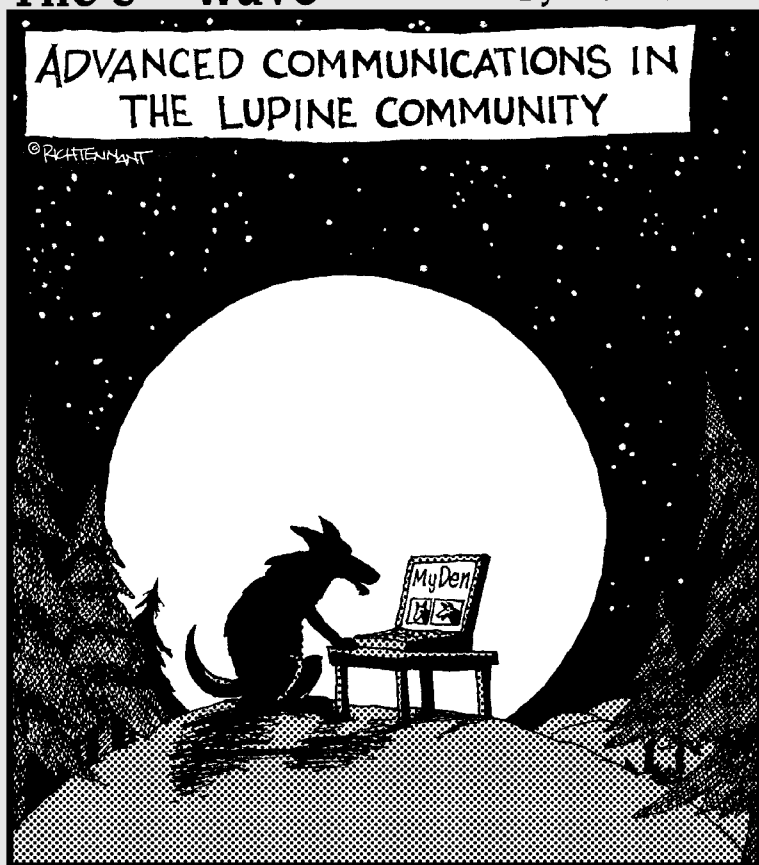
As consumers, we buy products for many different reasons. The product purchase can be a necessity, a comfort, or a luxury. It can also be a status symbol or a statement about your own identity. Whatever it may be, you want to make sure that you give your customers a way to promote their purchase among their peer group. You want them to be able to tell their referent and positional influencers what they've purchased and how it'll benefit them. As a result, it is important to allow for additional *badging*, which is the ability for your customer to announce his affinity with your product by placing a badge of it on his blog, social network profile, or Web site.

Part II

Putting SIM into Action

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Woo!"

In this part . . .

part II helps you get moving: I share how to launch your campaign, how to get your employees involved, and how to measure the outcomes of your campaign. After you read this part, you'll be equipped to hit the social platforms with a campaign that's tailored to your marketing needs.

Chapter 4

Launching SIM Campaigns

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering the key components of a successful SIM campaign
- ▶ Managing beyond the campaign
- ▶ Synchronizing the SIM campaign with other channels
- ▶ Responding to criticism

In this chapter, I discuss the components of a successful SIM campaign and how you can make it work in harmony with other digital marketing efforts. I also discuss how best to respond to criticism, how to turn a crisis to your advantage, and finally, some tactics for turning the campaign into a long-term marketing asset.

Discovering the Types of SIM Campaigns

Before you launch a campaign, you should know what's available to you. In this section, I talk about the different types of SIM campaigns.



Before you launch your SIM campaign, make sure you've done an inventory of all the other major SIM campaigns going on at the same time that target your customers or are within your industry. The last thing you want is to launch a campaign in which you're asking your customers to do basically the same thing that they may have just done for a competitor.

Blogger outreach

Probably the most common form of a SIM campaign is the blogger outreach program. This campaign typically takes the form of identifying influencer bloggers who reach your customers. They're the expert influencers who cover a topic and have a fan following.

Blogger outreach programs incentivize these bloggers to write about your brand or product. You can give them incentives by inviting them to the R&D labs of your company and treating them with the same deference that the mainstream press gets, to sending them sample products and providing them with prizes with which to run contests on their blogs. Campaigns are sometimes built around these influencers.

A debate is raging in the blogosphere about blogger compensation. Some bloggers absolutely refuse to accept compensation, while others are comfortable with it. You must know where your targeted blogger stands on this debate before reaching out to him or her.



Knowing how to reach these bloggers without coming across as heavy handed, commercial, and ignorant is critical. Before you reach out to them, be sure to read their blogs so that you know how they cover your brand or category, scan the comments on their blog posts so that you get a feel for the readers and how they participate, understand their policies with regards to brands engaging with them (some prefer to go through representatives, for example), and ideally try to develop a personal relationship based on the content that they publish and the topics they cover before approaching them with an idea.

UGC contests

Contests in all their various forms have always been a big hit in the marketing campaign arena. But now contests structured around user-generated content (UGC) are all the rage. And with good reason: They are invariably extremely popular, engaging, and fun. You structure a contest built on participants contributing something in return for rewards.

Sponsored virtual gifts

Sponsored gifts are getting more popular every day on the social networks. The reason is simple. They make money for the social network platform (Facebook sees huge revenue potential in this area), the brands discover that they get more user engagement per dollar than through any other campaign, and the participants invariably encourage others to engage, resulting in a multiplier effect. Other social networks, such as Cyworld and Second Life, have virtual gifting programs too but none are considered as successful as Facebook's.

Brand utilities

The basic idea behind brand utilities is that instead of providing the consumer with some advertising, you build their trust (and get their dollars) by giving them a utility application that provides actual value. If the utility serves a purpose, users adopt the application and think more favorably of your brand. Dollars that would have normally gone towards buying media go towards building the application instead.

Podcasting

A *podcast* is a digital audio file that is made available via Web syndication technologies such as RSS. Although strictly speaking, it's not social media, it's often classified as such because it allows anybody to easily syndicate their own audio content. You can use podcasts as a way to share information with your audiences.



Podcasts typically don't form a whole SIM campaign in and of themselves, but work well with other SIM ones.

Sponsored conversations

Sometimes the most effective SIM campaigns are the simplest ones. These campaigns engage with consumers in a straightforward, authentic fashion on a social platform while also aggregating other conversations, pointing to new ones, and stoking the community.

Recognizing What Makes a Good SIM Campaign

A *social influence marketing campaign* is one that specifically allows for social influence to take place digitally. Social influence marketing campaigns are a relatively new phenomenon. A few years ago, the closest comparison was word-of-mouth campaigns conducted in the offline world to build brand awareness for a product by incentivizing people to talk about it among themselves. Digital campaigns, for the most part, were about display advertising across large publisher Web sites, complemented with paid search campaigns and maybe e-mail campaigns. These campaigns were used to drive prospects to a *microsite* (a site devoted to that particular campaign) or a Web site, where they were encouraged to make purchases or engage with the brand.



With a SIM campaign, you mustn't drag people away from the social platform on which they're communicating and interacting with each other. They don't want to be distracted and you'll probably only waste precious marketing dollars trying to lure them to your Web site. Instead, it's more important to execute the campaign on those very platforms where your potential customers are in conversation. You have to engage your customers where *they* want to participate, not where you want them to be.

In the following four sections, I outline specific guidelines you should follow when launching a SIM campaign.

Define your objectives

This may seem obvious, but it is amazing how many of us forget about articulating the objectives when it comes to a SIM campaign. Your objectives need to be tightly defined, and they must be practical and actionable too. Check out the section "Using LinkedIn to Determine Your Objectives and Shape Your Campaign Plan," later in this chapter, for tips on how you can use LinkedIn with this task.



The objectives must also specify *where* you're planning to run the campaign, *whom* you're targeting (which customers and which influencers), the *duration* of the campaign, and *how* it synchronizes with other digital and offline marketing efforts.

Execute for influence

Traditionally, most campaigns have focused on getting a potential customer to take a specific action or to view a specific brand message. The focus has always been on that individual engaging with the brand in some form. However, with a SIM campaign, it is necessary to design for sharing, influencing, reciprocity, and social currency.

Unlike most other campaigns, a SIM campaign needs to accomplish two objectives concurrently:

✓ **It needs to engage the individual who's being targeted via the campaign.**

This is similar to any other type of digital marketing campaign. You want to engage with your target audience in a specific fashion and solicit a specific response.

✓ **You also need to design the campaign so that the target person shares or discusses it with someone else.**

This is the social currency element. The person should feel that by sharing the campaign with someone else, he derives greater value from it. This could be something as tangible as further discounts or intangible as status among his peers. The point being is that the more people the person shares the campaign with (or discusses it with), the more value he generates from it. In this sense, the campaign takes on a network effect, with its value growing each time someone participates.

Create partnerships

Few SIM campaigns are successful in isolation. Just as regular digital campaigns come together through a series of partnership between the agency, the advertiser, and the publisher, so too is the case with a SIM campaign. However, in this case,

the participants vary slightly. Rather than having a regular publisher, you have the social platform with whom to contend with. Your campaign must be in compliance with their policies; otherwise, they won't let it run on their platform.



But the platform players aren't the only ones you have to worry about. Invariably with most large brands, ad hoc user groups spring up that have a sense of ownership over the brand or product category on the social platform where you're planning to run the campaign.

For hints on how to forge partnerships within the professional niche platform LinkedIn, check out the section "Using LinkedIn to Determine Your Objectives and Shape Your Campaign Plan," later in this chapter.

Track the results

There's a saying in the world of social media that only successful SIM campaigns can be measured; failures can't be. The point is that marketers often say that SIM could not be measured if in their heart of hearts they know that their campaign has failed. If the campaign is a success, you bet they'll be telling you about it and explaining why exactly it was a success.

You can measure a SIM campaign a lot of different ways: The best method depends on the objectives, the targeted audience, and the social platform on which the campaign is running. But you must determine what you're going to measure and how *before* you run the campaign. Otherwise, you're never going to know whether it's a success. Sure, SIM campaigns often spiral out of control and the law of unintended consequences starts applying. That's not a bad thing, but it doesn't take away from the fact that the campaign you're running is being run for a purpose and you'll only know whether you've achieved that purpose if you're measuring the results. It's also important to measure a baseline of online activity before you begin the SIM engagement and decide what to measure. This will help you determine how successful your campaign is, relative to the level of conversations and online activity before running it.



Measure the influence generated, the *brand lift* (increased awareness of the brand), and, most importantly, whether any of this effort led to purchases. With the measurement tools in the marketplace (many of which are free or close to free), you can easily track your SIM campaign to the point of sale on the Web site or potentially even in a physical store.

Using LinkedIn to Determine Your Objectives and Shape Your Campaign Plan

The niche social platform LinkedIn (see Figure 4-1) is a great place for reaching professionals who may be able to help you shape your SIM campaign. After all, you're connecting with like-minded professionals who have skills similar or complementary to yours, which helps you and them achieve your goals — making for a true quid pro quo relationship, one of the foundations of a successful SIM campaign, as I discuss later in this chapter. (See Chapter 6 for more about measurement tools.)

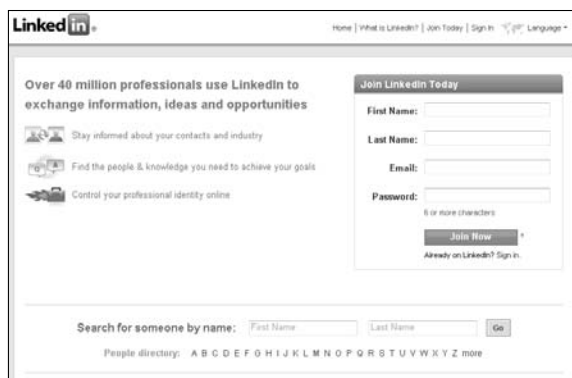


Figure 4-1: LinkedIn's membership page.

Making connections in LinkedIn

Your first order of business is to use the LinkedIn Service Providers directory to start identifying potential partners.

You can look for service providers that may be two or three degrees away from you, or you can target people you want to meet at specific companies by seeing who in your network can arrange an introduction. Ideas to keep in mind during your search include

✓ **Pay attention to people's titles.**

In the past, you may have told somebody, "I need to talk to someone who works at advertising sales for a major radio network." Today, with LinkedIn, you can look for an Advertising Sales Manager at Clear Channel Communications. Search for who you need to know, specifically, and LinkedIn will show you whether that person is connected to you by one, two, or three degrees.

✓ **Join the LinkedIn groups that would appeal to your business.**

One of the quickest ways to signal your interest and find like-minded businesspeople is to join a LinkedIn group that's relevant to your industry or niche. You can then search group members to find potential partners. Also, because your groups are listed on your profile, joining a group means that you'll have a lasting reference on your profile that will let people know that you identify with this group.

✓ **Search LinkedIn Answers for people with similar situations as yours.**

You might find someone at a similar company who looked for an SEO expert and asked the community for help. The people who respond may give you insight on whom to choose and to add to your network.

Getting help with your SIM campaign plan using LinkedIn

Odds are, you won't have all the answers when it comes to your SIM campaign plan. LinkedIn is an online community that lets you tap into its collective knowledge, enabling you to get real-time answers without involving think tanks or putting out thousands of dollars in fees. And what started out as a brainstorming session can even develop into a SIM campaign of its own!

Here are some tips on how to get the best possible results out of LinkedIn:

✓ **Ask targeted questions on LinkedIn Answers.**

LinkedIn Answers provides an excellent and free way to tap the knowledge base of the community, in an abundance of categories. Although you can post a general “Where do we go from here?” question, you can also ask a targeted or focused question concerning one element of your research and then gauge the response.

✓ **Watch your Question thread closely (through the My Q&A tab) and provide clarification or responses whenever needed.**

Discussions Answer threads may veer off from your intended topic, or the responses completely miss the mark because they don't interpret your question accurately. You can add clarification to the original question, or add your own reply in when needed.

After you've received at least five to ten responses, I recommend that you pick a best answer and some good answers by selecting the appropriate check boxes next to each person's answer. Not only does this reward people who gave you a lot of great information, it indicates to the community which responses best fit, in case someone finds this question in a search later on.

✓ **Keep the conversation open and continuous.**

Try to leave part of your question open-ended so that the people answering it can discuss their theories and you will have a more natural reason for follow-up with them individually.

✓ **Set up a LinkedIn Group that speaks to your target audience and your company's (or your) capabilities.**

For example, say that you're trying to reach accountants for financial services companies. To get the ball rolling, you could start the Financial Services Accountants Group, spread the word to your target audience, and stay in touch with that audience via this group whenever you want to know more about your target audience.



Participating — Four Rules of the Game

Many different factors can make or break a SIM campaign, and sometimes it's even just a matter of luck. But four rules matter above all else when it comes to SIM campaigns.

Be authentic

Authenticity is a tricky word. It's tricky because it's overused in the context of social media. Everybody talks about being authentic when marketing in the social media realm, but what that means is rarely explained. Authenticity is being honest and transparent: It's as simple as that.

Here are some examples.

- ✓ **When you set up a blog as part of your campaign, make sure that you're using your own voice.**

Don't outsource the publishing of content to a third party or to your PR team. If you have to, make sure that the writer accurately identifies himself as contributing on your behalf.

- ✓ **When you're publishing your thoughts, opinions, or simply sharing information, don't do so anonymously.**

In the world of social media, your consumers don't relate and care about brands as much as they care about the people behind them. People build relationships with each other and not with anonymous brands. So let your customers know who is behind the voice blogging, tweeting, or the contest on Facebook. You're not authentic if your customers don't know who you are.

- ✓ **Learn from the community and respond to their feedback.**

A key part of being authentic is telling your customers the way it really is, hearing their feedback (both positive and negative), and being willing to respond to it. It's no use participating in the social realm if you don't respond to commentary or feedback. If you're worried about not having the time to respond, consider not participating at all.

✓ **Be humane in your approach.**

It is easy to forget that for every comment and every unique visitor, there's an actual person somewhere in the world. Make sure that you participate with consideration and with the same respect that you'd reserve for someone you're talking to face to face.

Operate on quid pro quo basis

As you develop a SIM campaign in which you'll be demanding your customers attention (and often a lot more than that), think about the possible quid pro quo. Are you giving enough back in exchange? If you're not giving something back, your customers won't participate. They'll simply ignore you.

Here's an example of a SIM campaign that provided a strong quid pro quo for its audiences and was highlighted by Adweek. The all brand of laundry detergent created a promotion that aired on the TV show *Celebrity Apprentice*. Instead of focusing on the attributes of their detergent (how much can you talk about the attributes of laundry detergent, after all?), they associated all with a charitable cause through viral marketing. *Celebrity Apprentice* viewers saw a 30-second TV ad directing them to a Web site to watch videos that featured *Celebrity Apprentice* contestants Joan and Melissa Rivers (they could alternatively watch the video clips on YouTube). Each time viewers forwarded the videos, all donated 50 cents to charity. This was a SIM campaign that entertained the customer, encouraged him to share elements of it with his friends, and rewarded the customer for sharing. Success of the campaign was defined by the number of visits to the Web site, the number of unique visitors that registered for a coupon, the number of e-mails sent, and the amount of money raised for the charity.

Give participants equal status

Many marketing campaigns are designed to make the consumer feel special — more special than everyone else around them. That's a good thing. They feel special, and they end up having favorable feelings for your product and go out and buy it. Harley-Davidson is one brand that personifies this philosophy: It makes its customers feel special and different than everyone

else. That's wonderful, but it doesn't apply to the SIM realm in the same way. People across the social Web like to believe that they're as special and as unique as the next person, as they should. That's human nature, and the social Web encourages behavior through the voyeurism it allows for.

One example of giving everyone the ability to participate in status is the virtual gifting programs offered by some of the social networks. Facebook, for example, allows advertisers to sponsor virtual gifts, such as a drink or flowers, that are made available to users. A user sees the sponsored gift and gives it to his friend. The friend in turn either reciprocates or gives a new gift to someone else, having been made aware of the program when he first received the gift. Other friends who may have viewed the gift exchange through their Facebook newsfeed are motivated to give gifts to others as a result. And it goes on and on from there. It is easy to reciprocate and extend the virtual gifts to others. As a result, virtual gift programs on Facebook are successful.

Let go of the campaign

By virtue of starting the campaign, you probably feel that it is your responsibility to moderate and shape it. That doesn't have to be the case. Successful SIM campaigns are the ones in which the brand advocates take the campaign in new directions. As you develop the campaign, think of yourself as a participant and not just the owner of the campaign. You make better decisions regarding its evolution that way, and, by letting go, you allow others to take it in new and much amplified directions. And as always, remember your consumers will be in control of the campaign. That's what makes social influence marketing different. However, you will always be in control of your own response to the consumer participation. And that always presents exciting opportunities.

Killing the Campaign Expiry Date

You're probably used to thinking of campaigns as having a start date and an end date. And they usually need that. You have a finite marketing budget; the campaign is geared around

a series of events (like Christmas sales); the fact that new products replace old ones several times a year forces you to end campaigns and launch new ones. However, SIM campaigns are unique in that after they start, they may not stop when you want them to. It's like turning off the lights midway through a dinner party. If you have a conversation going and have gotten a community of people to come together around your brand, product, or campaign, the last thing you want to do is to suddenly disown them. It is very important that you plan for migrating that community of people to a broader purpose or goal.

Here are four ways to do that successfully:

✔ **Give participants new reasons to engage with your brand.**

Your original SIM campaign has a set purpose and objectives. After they're accomplished, don't turn off the lights. Instead, think of the next campaign that you have planned and how you can customize it to this community of people.

✔ **Encourage participants to coalesce into communities.**

Often the people who participate in your SIM campaign all share something in common. This may not always be the case, but depending upon the campaign type, they may indeed be interested in forming a community. If you believe that to be the case, encourage them to coalesce into self-supporting communities. It only helps you in the long run and gives new life to the campaign. Campaigns that have generated goodwill transform into customer communities that you can tap into for future marketing and business efforts.

✔ **Treat participants like existing customers.**

Someone who's participated in your SIM campaign may not have bought your product, but he has given you his time and probably has shared a bit of himself with you in the process. This may have taken the form of commenting on a blog post, participating in a contest, sharing your viral video clip with friends, or testing a product and writing a review about it. Because he's done more than someone who experienced a traditional marketing campaign, you owe him more. Treat him like an existing customer, whether that means sending him special offers, inviting him to participate in focus groups, or beta testing new

products. But as you do this, always remember that when you send your customers a special offer, it must be opt-in. Don't spam them if you don't have the permission to do so.

✓ **Extend the campaign to the Web site.**

Many a SIM campaign has failed because it was kept separate from the corporate Web site. The campaigns are traditionally built off micro sites with display advertising promoting them. When the campaign has run its course, the micro site is shut down and the advertising is stopped. In the case of a SIM campaign, don't shut down the micro site. Instead, promote the SIM campaign on the company Web site and, when the campaign winds down, find a place on the Web site for it. That way, your customers can always find it, and, if they coalesced into communities during the course of the campaign, they always have a place to return to.



Often, your participants may know better than you how to create greater meaning from the SIM campaign in the form of a community. Ask them what you should be doing if anything at all. You'll definitely get strong advice from the people who care the most.

Monitoring Brands and Conversations

It's no use running a SIM campaign if you can't measure it. You should always measure your SIM campaigns. Depending on the SIM campaign, different measurements may matter more than others. The brand and conversation monitoring tools help you measure the success of your SIM campaign and your ROI (return on investment). But they do a lot more than that. These tools help you plan and design your SIM campaigns. They give you a peek into actual user behavior on social platforms telling you what people are discussing, whether those conversations are positive or negative, and where they're taking place.

Anytime you're planning to launch a SIM campaign, you must begin by knowing what your target audiences are doing across the social Web. These tools help you do that. They can be classified into three groups:

- ✓ **High-end tools and services** that use linguistic analysis and deep data mining to provide insights into the conversations, who is having them, and where. These tools can cost anywhere from \$5,000 a month to \$50,000 a month, based mostly on the number of topics mined and the frequency. Included in this category are Cymfony, Nielsen BuzzMetrics, and Motivequest.
- ✓ **Low-end tools** that primarily focus on the volume of the conversation over a period of time and only cover positive and negative sentiment. Many of these tools are free or dirt-cheap. Included here are Radian6, Crimson Hexagon, and Scout Labs.
- ✓ **Middle-of-the-road tools** that do some analysis but don't always have the breadth of sources or the depth of analysis that the high-end tools have. Tools in this category are Visible Technologies and J.D. Power and Associates.

When choosing which tool to use, keep the following factors in mind:

- ✓ **Your audience:** If you don't know your audience and aren't sure what their motivations are, where they are participating, and how, you want one of the high-end tools.
- ✓ **The length of your SIM campaign:** If you're running a short campaign targeting a small population of users, you probably don't need to use one of the high-end tools. It won't be worth your dollars.
- ✓ **The size of the campaign:** If your campaign touches lots of people, you need a higher end tool that can help you track the activity and manage responses too.
- ✓ **Influencer identification:** If you're planning to focus on influencers rather than the mass population, choose a tool that's strongest at *influencer identification* (the ability to assist you in identifying influencers who influence customers about your brand). Not all tools do this equally well.
- ✓ **Regulatory considerations:** If you work in a highly regulated industry, you want a tool that lets you view commentary and glean insights anonymously. Higher/mid-level tools have this capability.

- ✓ **Dashboard functionality:** Some marketers require interactive dashboards through which they can view the conversation in real-time. If you're one of them, be sure to look for a tool that allows for that.



Lots of free tools for brand and conversation monitoring are out there. Regardless of the complexity of your SIM campaign and tracking needs, there's never any harm in beginning with the free tools. It'll only cost you the time in setting up the domain names. Also keep in mind that these tools are valuable to departments like public relations and customer research, too. They may be willing to share the costs of the tool or service with you.

Responding to Criticism

No SIM campaign is a complete success. It never is. Although you may reach many more people than you could have ever imagined, more likely than not, you're still bound to upset some people and even potentially spark an inflammatory response among a few others. At the outset, before you launch your SIM campaign, you need to plan for the potential criticism that may come your way. There's no perfect way to respond and the answer usually depends on the type of criticism, how widespread it is, and where it is coming from. Your PR department is usually more versed in responding to criticism (and crisis management more broadly) than anyone else, so you should be sure to bring them into the process early.

Regardless, here are some guidelines to keep at the back of your mind as you launch your campaign and prepare for the criticism that may come your way:

- ✓ **Respond early and often.**

There's no greater insult to people criticizing your SIM campaign than to be ignored. Ignoring criticism results in greater anger and more vitriolic responses that can snowball into a full-fledged crisis as the anger percolates across the social Web. Before you know it, your CEO is calling your desk — or maybe the *New York Times* — so respond quickly.

✓ Respond honestly and clearly.

Be sure to use your own name when you respond. Just as you have to be authentic with your campaign, you need to be so with your response too. Be clear about your rationale for why the campaign is designed the way it is, admit mistakes when the fault is yours, and be inclusive in your responses.

✓ Be prepared to change based on the feedback.

It's easier to be stubborn and not to change your SIM campaign. But if there's valid criticism about the campaign, whether it's of the structure, the creative aspect, or the rules regarding the type of conversation, you should incorporate the feedback and make the appropriate changes. You'll win back trust quickly.

✓ Don't hesitate to bring humor to the situation.

Some of the best responses have been those that included a touch of self-effacing humor. Brands aren't above people and neither is yours. Humor goes a long way in the social Web and sometimes the response becomes the new SIM campaign.

✓ Use the same channels for the response.

This may seem obvious, but it really isn't. Respond to people in the way they've criticized you. Don't go on national television to respond to a YouTube outburst. You'll become the laughingstock of the social Web.

Chapter 5

Energizing Employees within Your Company for Social Influence

In This Chapter

- ▶ Making decisions collaboratively
- ▶ Connecting employees with social tools

Until the beginning part of this decade, enterprise software looked and felt very different from the software that was designed for consumers. Enterprise software helped businesses manage customer relationships, handle knowledge management, communicate internally, and handle company operations focused on addressing the needs of IT managers more than the employees who were the users of the software. Emphasis was put on security, compliance, system control, interoperability, and maintenance — and strangely less on what employees wanted or needed. The fact that the software buyers (the IT managers) weren't the users (the employees) was largely to blame for this state of affairs. And then something changed.

When employees went home in the evenings, the software that they were using for their personal lives (Web or otherwise) was progressively a lot better designed and easier to use. And more than that, the software allowed them to contribute content, share, comment, and connect with each other. Savvy technology companies realized that there was an

opportunity to make enterprise software more like consumer software and social-oriented Web sites to better meet the needs of companies.

Steadily, these consumer-centric solutions gained traction in the corporate world, as employees started to discover that they could find free (or nearly free) and easy-to-use tools on the Internet. They could install these tools on their machines or access them online to do their jobs better. This consumerization of enterprise software forced IT managers to reevaluate how they chose software and how strict their security policies were. And with that, the Enterprise 2.0 transformation was born.

In this chapter, I discuss how you can practice social influence marketing within your own company by encouraging collaboration, knowledge sharing, and communication. I also discuss the different tools that you can use to help you in this endeavor. After all, if you want your customers to influence each other about your brand and product, you might want to start by figuring out how you can encourage employees to positively influence each other as well.



I included this chapter in the book because if you plan to engage with consumers across the Internet and practice social influence marketing, you had better be practicing those philosophies in your own backyard, too. It's one of the best ways to learn about social influence marketing — to practice those philosophies internally within your organization.

Encouraging Your Employees to Collaborate

Enterprise 2.0 is the use of social software platforms within companies, or between companies and their partners or customers, according to Andrew McAfee, a Harvard Business School professor who coined the term. These software platforms borrow design philosophies, features, and even technology standards from the Web sites and Web software that pervade the Internet.

Every day, more companies install these social software platforms because they want their employees to collaborate, communicate, share, and organize into communities of interest the way they do in their personal lives. There's no reason why your employees shouldn't use software built on these consumer-oriented design philosophies, with the collaboration layer built into the core — software like wikis, blogs, discussion forums, and microblogging solutions.



The best way to understand what Web tools work for your employees is to ask them about the Web sites they visit and the Web tools that they use in their personal lives. How they use consumer Web sites can give you hints at how they want to adopt enterprise tools.

The following sections include some recommendations for how you can get your employees to collaborate and socially influence each other in positive ways. These practices are a direct mirror of how you can engage with social influencers, too.



Employees always compete with each other for promotions, bonuses, and better career opportunities. That will never change, and it will always affect their willingness to collaborate and work with each other. As you encourage employees to socially influence each other, be aware of any insecurities they have.

Energizing employees: It's nothing new

This isn't the first time that energizing employees for social influence and knowledge sharing has been discussed. Debates in the knowledge management community on how best to get employees to collaborate date back to the early 1990s. For a long time, companies saw the Holy Grail of knowledge management being the ability to capture everything that was in an employee's head in a database so that if the employee were to leave the company, it wouldn't suffer.

This thinking evolved to the realization that no firm can truly capture the experiences and knowledge in an employee's brain, and by the time it does so (if that were possible!), the information or knowledge is stale. Since then, the focus has shifted to energizing employees to collaborate, exchange information, and motivate one another to increase innovation and employee productivity.

Rewarding teams

Most companies are organized to reward individual performance and promote the rising stars more quickly than other employees. If you want to foster a collaborative environment where employees learn from each other, share their knowledge generously, and participate in social platforms geared toward harnessing the collective intelligence, think carefully about how you reward performance. You might be well served by putting more emphasis on team versus individual performance.

Treating everyone equally

Employees usually thrive on competition. That's a good thing. But employees who feel left out of the loop or feel that they aren't seen as critical to the organization are less likely to give their time and brain power for the community. Be sure that you treat every employee equally if you truly want to foster collaboration and the free exchange of information among your employees. They'll speak only if you give them ample opportunities and encouragement to do so. You need to let them speak on their own terms, too, whether that be through the technologies that they prefer, the locations of their choice (team meetings, suggestion boxes, or one on one meetings), or with the mentors that they seek out.

Trusting your employees

Just as it's imperative for you to trust consumers and let them share ownership of your brand, so, too, must you trust your employees to converse, communicate, and collaborate with each other respectfully and productively. If you don't trust your employees, they won't trust you, and they definitely won't want to give their time to furthering the objectives of the organization. This matters most when you're trying to energize them for social influence, as it requires a commitment and not just a job description to accomplish.

Creating the right culture

The right office culture is imperative if you want your employees to engage with one another in conversations, be transparent about what they don't know, and be willing to listen and learn from their peers, including the younger or more junior ones. Your culture needs to be one of humility and openness, and one that allows initiative without punishing people too harshly for mistakes. The way you need to behave in the social Web to engage with your customers in a meaningful way applies to the way you must engage with your employees, too. And it all starts with culture.

Placing a premium on groups with a purpose

A key ingredient to energizing employees for social influence is to put the right mix of employees in a room (real or virtual) together to brainstorm, innovate, or accomplish a specific task. Bring an eclectic mix of employees together and ask them to collaborate on a specific task at hand. Their diverse skills and personalities result in unique results and can lay the foundation for a more collaborative work environment.



Collaborating in a work environment is very different from collaborating in one's personal life. You need clearly defined objectives for people to rally around; otherwise, valuable company time may be wasted.

Avoiding excessive snooping

I'm always amazed to learn about companies that peek into their employees' e-mail accounts and watch what Web sites they visit. If you want to create a culture of social interaction where people in different offices or even countries come together and share their insights and learn from one another online, you need to make them feel that they're not being watched, tracked, or evaluated every step of the way. Treat them with the respect that you give your bosses, and they'll deliver amazing work. Whatever you do, don't snoop around. You'll lose their trust, respect, and commitment.

Picking Social Software for Social Influence

A myriad range of social software companies provides solutions for businesses. These vary from software as a service (SaaS) solutions that you can rent for a few dollars per month to enterprise-grade solutions that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and have been retooled for the social world. It can be confusing, finding the right solution for your company as you create an environment that energizes employees for social influence, but here are the four classes of software and Web solutions to consider.

Enterprise software

If you belong to a large organization, you probably don't control what software you get to use. In these instances, you should try to influence your IT department to buy emergent social software or enterprise software upgrades that include social functionality that can either be plugged into your enterprise environment or run independently.

- ✓ **Microsoft SharePoint** (<http://sharepoint.microsoft.com>; see Figure 5-1) is probably the most popular collaboration software in companies today and integrates with Microsoft Office and other Microsoft products very easily.
- ✓ **SAP** (www.sap.com) is deployed across large enterprises as it handles industrial grade business operations, customer management, financial, and HR needs very well.
- ✓ **IBM** (www.ibm.com) with its Web sphere portal is another great option; it's easy to build custom applications on it that can be delivered through a portal environment.
- ✓ **Telligent** (<http://telligent.com>) is known for its rich community functionality (its Community server product) and how it integrates with the rest of a company's IT infrastructure.

Every day, these enterprise-grade collaboration platforms add more social features to their application suites. Most have Web-based interfaces, too.

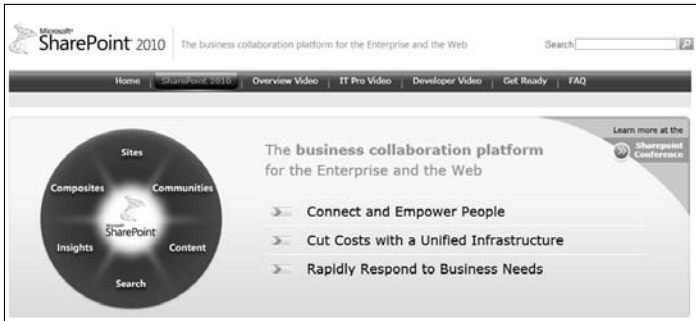


Figure 5-1: Microsoft SharePoint.

Emergent enterprise social software

Emergent enterprise social software products are built from the ground up to be collaboration tools, leveraging the design philosophies, needs, and requirements of everyday people. They borrow from the likes of Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, and YouTube but add an enterprise flavor that makes them powerful. There are relatively new players:

- ✓ **Confluence** (www.atlassian.com/software/confluence)
- ✓ **Socialtext** (www.socialtext.com)
- ✓ **NewsGator** (www.newsgator.com)

These solutions plug into existing corporate software environments and work with the enterprise software effectively. Because the companies who provide enterprise social software understand the needs of big business, they're usually compliant with the security requirements of most IT departments. The software is delivered shrink-wrapped or in some cases as a software as a service model. (With the software as a service model, you don't buy software but lease it on a monthly basis over the Internet.)

Small-scale social software

Smaller, significantly cheaper solutions that work nicely for small business environments are categorized as small-scale social software. Free or nearly-free applications are

- ✓ **Google's Application Suite** (www.google.com/apps) integrates nicely with Google mail. The Google application suite is mostly free and shares the same user experience of Google search. So if you like the search product, you'll like this.
- ✓ **Zoho** (www.zoho.com) is similar to the Google Application Suite but far richer in functionality. It is also Web-based and includes several related tools, such as project management and a customer relationship management software.

Other strong companies to look at include

- ✓ **Traction Software** (www.tractionsoftware.com) is feature rich and combines the best of blogging with a wiki environment. Traction Software isn't free and for some users can appear complex, but it's a great solution for knowledge management.
- ✓ **Wetpaint** (www.wetpaint.com) is a simple application that's grounded in all the wiki philosophies. As a result, it's designed to make it very easy for you to build your own site, share it with a select group of people, and collaborate around it. It can be used within your organization or for light public facing needs.
- ✓ **37signals** (www.37signals.com) takes a different approach in that it has a distinct set of specific Web tools that can help you conduct your business. From a project management application to a tool that tracks leads, it accomplishes a very specific need.

Consumer social software

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that you can also use consumer-oriented social platforms for your business collaboration needs. Whether it's LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), Plaxo (www.plaxo.com), Ning (www.ning.com), SlideShare (www.slideshare.net), or even Facebook (www.facebook.com), they're all capable of handling private groups who upload and share files and discussions.



Some of these platforms may be more secure than others (especially with third-party tools and plug-ins overlaid on top of them), but they're all options for collaborating among employees, nevertheless. In the case of LinkedIn, its third-party plug-ins let you share presentations, publish news, run polls, and collaborate on documents, all from within LinkedIn and with people in your social graph.

Chapter 6

Applying Metrics to the SIM Realm

In This Chapter

- ▶ Calculating your SIM score
- ▶ Measuring influencer activity
- ▶ Analyzing activity on various social media platforms

There's a common myth that social influence marketing isn't really measurable. Many a consultant has said that you can't measure the value of a conversation. Some marketers believe that it's too early to measure social influence marketing because the strategies and tactics are too fresh. They believe that measuring a phenomenon is always difficult, especially when you're still figuring out how to market in it.

The truth is that social influence marketing is as measurable as any other form of marketing. It wasn't the case two years ago — or maybe even a year ago — but that's quickly changing. Today, there are tools, techniques, and mechanisms to measure social influence marketing. These are broader brand metrics, which may not be as measurable as a direct-response marketer may like.

There are also specific campaign or program-oriented metrics that you can capture, analyze, and map to other performance indicators. These may be in the category of a YouTube campaign, an online community effort, a pass-along widget, a blogger outreach program, or a viral video campaign.



It's all well and good to capture metrics about your social influence marketing efforts, whether they're broader brand metrics or specific ones around social influence marketing

campaigns. But it's extremely important to marry these metrics with your other marketing metrics and see how they correlate. For example, it's no use if you have lots of widget installations if they have no correlation with brand awareness, favorability, or actual sales. As a result, the most important challenge in social influence marketing is not measuring it, but correlating the data to broader business objectives. Therefore, when you put your social influence marketing metrics in place, think about how you can use them to determine whether you met your marketing objectives and also how you want to interpret them in the context of the rest of your marketing and business objectives. Otherwise, you'll just be capturing meaningless data.

A Core Measure of Social Influence Marketing

In this section, I start by suggesting a core brand-oriented metric — the single metric that you must map your social influence marketing objectives against. And not just that. You must map your brand against this metric on an ongoing basis. I call it the social influence marketing score, or the SIM score. It's inspired by the Net Promoter Score, which asks customers, regarding the specific product or service, the question “How likely are you to recommend the product to a colleague or a friend?” It then subtracts the number of detractors from the number of promoters to give a single Net Promoter Score. You'll notice that while the Net Promoter Score is fundamentally a loyalty metric, the SIM score is a brand-health metric, but based on customer interactions, too.

As you look at the SIM score, keep in mind that the industry is still in the throes of determining the best holistic metric. Expect more from the Interactive Advertising Bureau (www.iab.net) and the Social Media Advertising Consortium (www.smac.org) on this subject in the next few months.

The SIM score is designed to be a pivotal measure that recognizes the participatory nature of branding and, more directly, your brand's health compared to all of your direct competitors in the social Web. Think of the SIM score as the blood pressure for your brand in the social Web. It'll tell you how you're doing but not why or what to do about anything that

might be going wrong. Those questions are answered when you dig deeper into understanding the factors that contribute to the SIM score.

You calculate the SIM score based on these two critical attributes:

- ✓ The total share of consumer conversations that your brand has online. This is fundamentally about reach — the volume of conversations surrounding your brand.
- ✓ The degree to which consumers like, dislike, or have no opinion of your brand when they talk to each other about you. It's centered around impact or consumer sentiment.

These two attributes combined make up the SIM score. This is important because it isn't enough that your brand has a very large share of consumer conversations, especially if most of those conversations are negative in nature. That does more harm than good to your brand. It's important that you adjust the volume of the conversations for the sentiment surrounding your brand.



You should track the SIM score for each brand on an ongoing basis as the brand launches campaigns, brings new products to market, activates influencers, and engages with customers across the social Web. And track your SIM score before your campaigns so that you can always benchmark your score against a baseline.

Here's the formula for calculating the SIM score for your brand, relative to its competitors:

$$\text{SIM score} = \text{net sentiment for the brand} \div \text{net sentiment for the industry}$$

The components of the formula are as follows:

$$\text{Net sentiment for the brand} = (\text{positive} + \text{neutral conversations} - \text{negative conversations}) \div \text{total conversations for the brand}$$

$$\text{Net sentiment for the industry} = (\text{positive} + \text{neutral conversations} - \text{negative conversations}) \div \text{total conversations for the industry}$$

Note four important factors about the SIM score:

✓ **This is a relative score versus your competitors.**

The competitors you choose to include in the calculations directly impact your SIM score. So the SIM score is primarily a relative measurement.

✓ **The SIM score combines positive and neutral sentiment.**

An argument can be made for using only positive sentiment and ignoring neutral sentiment. The SIM score includes neutral sentiment, too, because any mention of your brand helps your brand awareness (as long as it isn't a negative). And therefore, you should factor it into the score.

✓ **The sourcing and quality of the data that you use to compute the SIM score may directly affect the total scores.**

The data that you use to compute your SIM score comes from the conversational monitoring firms that I discuss in earlier chapters. These companies, including Visible Technologies (www.visibletechnologies.com; see Figure 6-1), TNS Cymfony (www.cymfony.com), Nielsen BuzzMetrics (www.nielsen-online.com), Scout Labs (www.scoutlabs.com), and others count the total number of conversations pertaining to your brand (usually using brand mentions as a way to make the calculation) and then through a technological system add sentiment (positive, neutral, and negative) to each conversational instance.

✓ **Some monitoring vendors let you capture mixed conversations, too.**

These are conversations that include both positive and negative sentiment within them. If you're capturing mixed sentiment for your brand, use those numbers for the denominator (total brand or total industry) calculations, but don't use them for the numerator. Mixed conversations, by definition, can't reliably be ascertained as helping the brand and, therefore, can't be included with positive or neutral conversations in the numerator.



Figure 6-1: Visible Technologies.



The data you get from a monitoring firm may not always be good. These technology vendors are getting better and better every day in capturing all the conversations that are happening across the social Web and running those conversations against their sentiment engines. But they don't capture the sum of all the social media conversations. The reason is that a few social platforms, like Facebook, don't allow these vendors to grab the conversation data behind the login, total it, and add sentiment to it. This, of course, may change as Facebook rolls out new versions of Lexicon, which supposedly will let you capture volume and sentiment data.

However, most of the large vendors grab data from all the blogs, forums, microblogging solutions, and community sites online. While they may not include logged-in Facebook pages, they do account for the majority of the conversations happening online and, in that, serve as a good measure.

To give you a perspective on how SIM scoring looks, Table 6-1 shows an example of SIM scores in the auto industry. There were 2,106,523 social media conversations concerning five brands in the auto industry in the last six months of 2008. The brands included were Ford, Honda, Toyota, Nissan, and GM. The table shows their share of voice, net sentiment, and their SIM scores.

Table 6-1 **Auto Industry SIM Scores**

<i>Company</i>	<i>Share of Voice</i>	<i>Net Sentiment</i>	<i>SIM Score</i>
Honda	29.6%	81%	30
Ford	31.8%	78%	31
GM	5.8%	73%	5
Nissan	14.5%	80%	15
Toyota	18.1%	80%	18

What's interesting is how share of voice and net sentiment both impact the SIM score. Toyota's share of voice is larger than Nissan's, which contributes to its higher SIM score, for example. Ford, which faced similar challenges to GM in the last half of 2008, has a much higher SIM score. This may be because recently they've invested a lot more in managing their brand in social media. While GM was early in experimenting with social media, with a CEO blog and a UGC campaign, its handling of the bailout in 2008 may have hurt its reputation in the social Web.

So what do you do with the SIM score? You track it against all your marketing activities to determine how they're impacting your brand in the social Web. As you track your SIM score over time, you should be able to answer questions like these:

- ✓ What impact does advertising in all the different mediums have on a SIM score?
- ✓ How does a SIM score affect overall brand affinity and purchasing decisions for your brand over time?
- ✓ What does it take to put a program in place to manage one's SIM score effectively? Can you do so in a cost-effective manner?
- ✓ How does your SIM score differ based on specific topics of conversations?



TIP

Along with actual metrics based on customer behavior, you can use heuristic (or expert) evaluations to ascertain how your brand is doing in the social Web in relation to its direct competitors. Wetpaint and The Altimeter Group came together to establish a heuristic framework for ranking the

world's most engaging brands. You can see the list and view the methodology (which also allows you to rank your own brand) at Engagementdb (www.engagementdb.com).

Considering Influencer-Specific Metrics

It isn't enough to calculate your SIM score on an ongoing basis. That's a very important measure. It's your brand health in the social Web, but it isn't the only measure. You need to measure how your brand stacks up against the influencers whom you care about, the platforms on which you participate, and for the campaigns that you run.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, there are three types of influencers surrounding your customers: expert, referent, and positional influencers. You need to know how many of the influencers in each of these categories are favorably inclined toward your brand and are, as a result, favorably influencing your customers.

This is no easy task, and the truth is that determining and measuring the favorability of influencers toward your brand is an imperfect science. It simply hasn't been figured out yet. But, here are some tips for measurement surrounding specific types of influencers:

- ✓ **Expert influencers:** Once you identify them, track their press mentions, blog posts, Twitter streams, Facebook comments, and discussion forum responses to determine how favorably or unfavorably they talk about your brand. Many of the conversational monitoring vendors provide tools that help you identify these influencers and track their favorability toward you.
- ✓ **Referent influencers:** Technology companies like Unbound Technologies (www.unboundtech.com; see Figure 6-2) and Rapleaf (www.rapleaf.com) can help you identify your referent influencers on the specific social platforms by anonymously analyzing the profiles of people for mentions of your industry category or your brand specifically. They then map these to a meta-social

graph and can tell you how many people within your demographic and target audience have high networks, influence other people significantly, and talk about your category or brand favorably.

✓ **Positional influencers:** Other vendors, like Clearspring (www.clearspring.com) and Gigya (www.gigya.com), do the tracking for you by capturing how people download widgets that they see on their friends' blogs and add them to their own pages. This helps identify both positional and referent influencers. For example, Razorfish (my employer) patented an incremental action tag solution that tracks how social media applications (widgets, applications, viral media, and so on) are downloaded and passed along.



Figure 6-2: Unbound Technologies.

After you identify the influencers and you're tracking their favorability toward your brand, the next question is whether they're actually influencing significant conversations across the social Web and pushing people to your Web site or to buy your product. That's not easy to measure, but the industry is moving in that direction. Google, for example, is trying to develop an influencer rank for every person based on how much content people share with their friends and how likely someone is to share that content further along, depending on the source.

Fundamentally, with your social influencers, irrespective of the type, you want to understand who they are, where they're

participating, with whom they're participating, what topics they're interested in, and how much they're sharing.

Evaluating Each Platform's Metrics

Different social platforms have different mechanisms for measurement. For each major social platform, you must know what you can measure and what the numbers you get actually mean. In this section, I look at the major social platforms and discuss the forms of measurement on each one of them.

Measurement components fall into four “buckets.” Each time you launch a social influence marketing program, try to check off measurement objectives against these four criteria, as defined by Sometrics (www.sometrics.com; see Figure 6-3), one of the leading analytics providers in the social media space:



Figure 6-3: Sometrics.

- ✓ **Traffic:** Includes impressions, unique users, and basic engagement, including page views per visit.
- ✓ **Demographics:** Covers the basics of who is visiting or interacting with your brand. It typically includes age, gender, income, education, and location.

- ✓ **Sociographics:** Captures your customers' friends and their relative importance, based on their interests and where they lie in your customers' social graphs.
- ✓ **Social actions:** Includes the actual social activity undertaken by your customers when they interact with you on the social platform — the specifics of what they do.



For every metric that you track for your brand on the different social platforms, try to capture the same metrics for your direct competitors. It's extremely important to know how their Facebook fan pages, YouTube channels, Twitter accounts, and MySpace profiles engage people in contrast to your own presence on the social networks.

Facebook

Your brand probably has a fan page on Facebook. You may even have done some advertising on Facebook. Here's a list of fan-page-related metrics regarding what you can measure, why you should measure those items, and what the measurements actually mean to you and your brand. You can find these metrics by going to your Facebook page, clicking Edit This Page, and choosing All Page Insights. Remember that you need to be designated as a page administrator to see the Edit This Page link.

- ✓ **Number of fans:** If you have a fan page on Facebook, the most basic measure is the number of fans. These are the Facebook users who have specifically chosen to align themselves with your brand. The number of fans largely represents how popular your brand is on Facebook. This is important because you can blast messages to all your fans. You can also see demographic information about them. Along with number of fans, the average growth of fans is an important metric, too.

For example, one of the most popular fan pages on Facebook is the Victoria's Secret PINK fan page, with more than 1.3 million fans. That, in and of itself, is a huge success. But with an average growth rate of 3,000 fans per day, the PINK page is a continuous success. Keep in mind, though, that Victoria's Secret PINK is one of the top ten Facebook fan pages. Many small businesses have achieved marketing success with even just 1,000 fans.

✓ **Page interactions:** The number of fans is the starting point of Facebook fan page metrics, but page interactions of those fans matter as much. Facebook captures page interactions for you and lets you track the following interactions: total interactions, interactions per post, post quality, stream click-through rate, discussion posts, and reviews.

Look at each of these metrics in more detail:

- *Total interactions:* The total number of comments, wall posts, and other fan-driven interactions with the page
- *Interactions per post:* The average number of comments, wall posts, and other interactions generated by each post
- *Post quality:* An abstract measurement from Facebook indicating the quality of each post. Increased post quality means deeper engagement with your brand.
- *Stream CTR:* Your stream click-through rate (CTR) and your engagement click-through rate measure how much people engage with your content in a news feed. *Stream* implies clicks to your fan page from a news feed (the first page you see when you log in to Facebook), and *engagement* implies click-through rates on wall posts that you publish on the Facebook fan page. The social media agency Vitruue (www.vitruue.com) says that click-through rates for content on a brand page (engagement click-through rate) are as high as 6.49 percent. This data is currently based on a sample, and at the time this chapter was written, the engagement rate statistics weren't easily verifiable.
- *Discussion posts:* The number of discussion topics that your fans publish on your fan page.
- *Reviews:* The number of times that fans use the Facebook Reviews application to rate your page.

Outside of the fan pages, Facebook applications allow you to capture a lot of important metrics. Building a Facebook application is like building a Web site: You need to define the strategy, brainstorm the concept, and then, with the help of a designer and a developer, actually build it before submitting

the application to Facebook for approval so that it can appear in its directory and be made available to all users. If you've built a Facebook application and have it running on your fan page or on the profile pages of Facebook users, you can capture data about the number of users who have

- ✓ Added your application tab
- ✓ Added your application profile box to their profiles
- ✓ Added your application information section
- ✓ Bookmarked your application
- ✓ Subscribed to your application e-mails

You can also capture a variety of metrics for user activity involving your Facebook applications. These include the number of:

- ✓ Active users during the past 7 days
- ✓ Active users during the past 30 days
- ✓ Canvas page views. (The *canvas page* is the main page for your application.)
- ✓ Unique canvas page viewers

And then, if you're more technically minded, here are some more technical metrics:

- ✓ Number of API (application programming interface) calls made
- ✓ Number of unique users on whose behalf your application made API calls
- ✓ Average HTTP request time for canvas pages
- ✓ Average FBML (Facebook Markup Language) render time for canvas pages

Outside of the Facebook fan pages and applications, you can also measure the volume of conversation regarding your brand and your competitors on Facebook. This is simply a measure of the number of times that your brand (or its competitors) has been mentioned in conversation on Facebook. The Facebook application Lexicon (www.facebook.com/lexicon) lets you measure the total number of conversations for your brand, as shown in Figure 6-4.

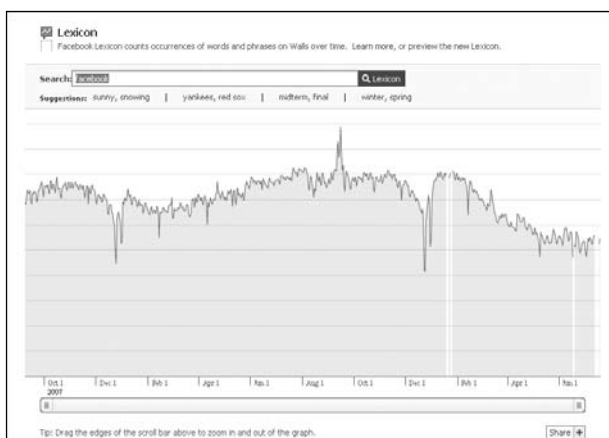


Figure 6-4: Facebook Lexicon.

The problem with Lexicon is that your brand needs to be mentioned *a lot* to even appear within the Lexicon tool. The good news is that Facebook is working on a new version of Lexicon, which will tell you the exact number of mentions, sentiment, demographics trends, word association with your brand, pulse, and location on a map. This new Lexicon is in preview mode at the moment, and only select words can be viewed against these metrics. The tool should be made available for the public soon.

As you can see, a lot of activity on Facebook can be measured. What matters most, though, is how those measurements support your business. It's no use measuring a lot of different things on Facebook if it doesn't help your business. Also, metrics aren't useful if you don't know what to do with them. As a result, before you start a social influence marketing program on Facebook, think carefully about what you're trying to accomplish and which metrics are most appropriate for that purpose. And then start the measuring. In fact, this guideline applies to any form of measurement on all the social platforms.



TIP AppData (www.appdata.com) tracks the most popular Facebook applications on a daily basis. You can also view which developers are responsible for the most popular applications. As of August 2009, the most popular applications are Farmville, Causes, LivingSocial, Movies, and We're Related. The developers with the most installations of their applications are Zynga, Playfish, RockYou!, Slide, Inc., and LivingSocial.

YouTube and video clips

With the launch of YouTube Insight (www.youtube.com/my_videos_insight), you have access to more data on the clips you publish and who views them. YouTube Insight gives you the following statistics about your users and clips:

- ✓ **Views:** First and foremost, you can see the total number of views charted out by week. This is the same data that public users can see. The tool also shows you the number of unique views and the number of views by location (country or state). This can tell you if the people watching your clips are actually in your target market.
- ✓ **Demographics:** This categorizes the data by age, telling you what percentage of the views came from users in specific age groups, such as 25–34 year olds.
- ✓ **Community:** This gives you information about the people who have interacted with your YouTube clips. This includes commenting, ratings, and favoriting counts.



You can also export these statistics from YouTube Insights to a spreadsheet to easily keep track of your stats from month to month.

You can also narrow these statistics by video or by geographic region. This is extremely helpful because it can tell you, for example, how much higher your Japanese viewers rated a video clip as compared to ratings from your American viewers.

However, these metrics from YouTube are sometimes not enough to get an accurate picture. In that case, it helps to have more metrics, and fortunately, analytics companies like TubeMogul (www.tubemogul.com; see Figure 6-5) can provide those.

Here are some of the analytics that companies like TubeMogul can provide if you use their services to upload and distribute video clips across the social Web:

- ✓ **E-mail and embed reports:** Tells you the number of times your video clip has been e-mailed to someone or embedded on a blog or a Web site.



Figure 6-5: TubeMogul.

- ✓ **Link intelligence:** Gives you insight into who is linking to your video clips. The data includes information about links on both blogs and traditional Web sites.
- ✓ **Aggregation of data:** Lets you view aggregate statistics on several video clips at a time. For example, you can access aggregate data on clips that all belong to a single campaign.

Also, depending on whether or not you're using a video site with Adobe Flash, you can also track viewed minutes, viewer attention, per-stream quality, syndication tracking, and player tracking.

Twitter

Because Twitter has an open API (application programming interface), you can measure a lot more on Twitter than elsewhere. This is largely because developers have built dozens and dozens of analytic tools on top of Twitter. All of these can help you understand the reach and frequency of the 140-character tweets.

As with the blogosphere, you can learn a lot about the number of people who get your tweets, how many are retweeted, and which influencers help you the most. But there's something

you need to keep in mind: What you can't find out is who those actual people are who are reading the tweets — their demographics, psychographics, and behaviors. In other words, don't expect to get from Twitter the same level of detail around your customers that you do when you run banner campaigns across the Internet. This may change in time, but as I'm writing this book, those numbers aren't as accessible.

Here's what you can find out from Twitter:

- ✓ **Brand mentions:** The first and most basic metric for Twitter is knowing how your brand is mentioned and with what frequency on Twitter. Twitter Search (<http://search.twitter.com>) lets you scan all published tweets for mentions of your brand. TweetVolume (www.tweetvolume.com; see Figure 6-6) can also help with understanding the volume of tweets about your brand.
- ✓ **Influence:** You can measure influence in Twitter more directly than in any other social platform. With tools like Twinfluence (www.twinfluence.com), you can measure the reach, velocity, and social capital of anyone on Twitter, including your own brand. As you follow people and they follow you, you can use Twinfluence to determine the potential reach of your tweets based on who retweets them. Twitter Grader (www.twittergrader.com) also computes a username's relative ranking compared to other users on Twitter. Twitterrank (<http://twitterrank.com>) tells you your rank versus other Twitter uses. That, too, can be considered a measure of influence.
- ✓ **Pass-along and click-throughs:** Knowing how much your influencers tweet about you is very important to track as well. The best way to do this is by continuously scanning the list of tweets that mention your brand or your username specifically. This helps you understand how much you're being retweeted. Dashboards like TweetDeck (www.tweetdeck.com; see Figure 6-7) can make this tracking much easier because they allow you to list multiple search terms and see all your replies (basically, tweets that reference your username) in one place. To see the most popular conversation topics that are being tweeted and retweeted, consider using a tool like Tweetlists (www.tweetlists.com).



Figure 6-6: TweetVolume.



Figure 6-7: TweetDeck.

In addition to tracking tweets that have been passed along, you may want to understand how many tweets have resulted in clicks to your Web site. This is where services like bit.ly (www.bit.ly.com; see Figure 6-8) and Tweetburner (www.tweetburner.com) come into the picture. You can shorten

Web site addresses using these services for your Tweets. But the greatest benefit is that when you do so, you can track the exact number of people who clicked the link in your tweet over time. For example, if you're promoting a special discount, you can tweet about that discount and include a link to the page on your Web site using bit.ly. You can see, on an hourly basis, the number of people who actually click the link in your tweet. That way, you can determine the number of clicks and the number of people who took advantage of the discount.

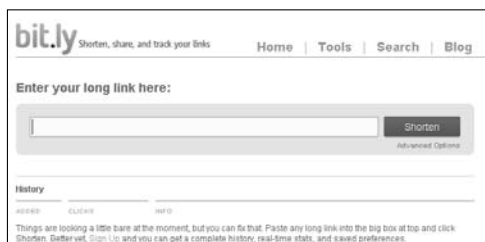


Figure 6-8: bit.ly.

Another loosely related factor to consider with Twitter and your Web site: It's important to track the number of visitors coming to your Web site from Twitter. This is helpful to understand from a lead-generation perspective. Knowing how many people are coming to your Web site from Twitter versus from search engine or display banner campaigns can and should influence how much effort you put into your Twitter marketing efforts.



The Twitter API is very flexible, allowing new developers to quickly build new Twitter applications. So by the time you read this chapter, there may be a new Twitter analytics tool out on the market, which is why I recommend always searching the Web for new Twitter applications or using a Twitter directory like the Twitter Fan Wiki (<http://twitter.pbworks.com/Apps>).

The blogosphere

Don't ignore the blogosphere. Outside of Facebook, most online conversations happen within the blogosphere. Measuring the influence and reach of your brand across the

blogosphere can be tricky, though. Millions and millions of blogs are published every day with billions of posts published. Does a brand mention on a specific blog matter? How do you know which posts matters over which others?

Here are some metrics that you can and should capture from the blogosphere. These build on the core metrics of unique visitors, page views, and return rates:

- ✓ Number of brand mentions versus your competitors
- ✓ Ratio of comments and *trackbacks* (a method of counting of other bloggers that reference your post) to posts on your own blogs
- ✓ Frequency of posts and comments on your blog and your competitors' blogs
- ✓ Technorati ranking of blogs that mention your brand
- ✓ Technorati ranking of your blog and your competitors'
- ✓ Total number of conversations (unique visitors to all sites talking about your brand)
- ✓ Total number of times that the post has been tweeted or retweeted, saved to Digg, tagged in Delicious, and discussed on FriendFeed

Widgets and social applications

Outside of applications that reside within Facebook, you should measure the impact of your social media widgets and applications elsewhere on the Internet. Here are some of the key metrics to consider, as introduced by the Social Media Working Group of the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau):

- ✓ **Installs:** Simply the number of people who have installed your application.
- ✓ **Active users:** The number of total users interacting with your application over a day, week, or month. Some applications lose significant activity over time, so watch this metric carefully.
- ✓ **Audience profile:** Demographics of the people who are interacting with your widget. This may need to be self reported, depending on where you install the widget.

- ✓ **Unique user reach:** The percentage of users who have installed the application among the total audience of social media users.
- ✓ **Growth:** The average number of increase in users within a specific time frame (between two dates).
- ✓ **Influence:** The average number of friends among users who have installed the application. This is a relatively less meaningful metric.
- ✓ **Application/Widget installs:** The number of widget installs that a user has on his or her profile. This matters because more installs typically may mean lower interactions with your widget.
- ✓ **Active users/Widgets in the wild:** The number of people using the widgets on a regular basis.
- ✓ **Longevity/Lifecycle:** Another key metric that tracks how long a widget or application stays installed by a user before he or she uninstalls it.

Needless to say, when examining these metrics, always try to understand how the metrics you capture relate to actual sales. Sometimes the link may be easy, but in other cases, especially if you do not have large numbers, drawing the correlation between the social platform's metrics and your sales may be difficult.



Another application to use as you try to understand brand health in the social Web is Status Search (www.statussearch.net). This application lets you search within your Twitter and Facebook friends' statuses. For example, if your brand has 30,000 fans, you'll potentially be able to use Status Search to see if any of your fans are discussing your brand in their own status updates. Keep in mind that this application is still in beta and may be a little buggy at the moment.

Website community metrics

If you're evolving your own Web site for social influence marketing, you may require new metrics to understand how successful you are. Rather than just measure how many people are visiting your Web site and where they're coming from, you're going to need to look at what exactly they're

doing on your Web site and how they're interacting with each other. Whether you're using community software from a vendor like Lithium (www.lithium.com) or Pluck (www.pluck.com) or have installed customer reviews from Bazaarvoice (www.bazaarvoice.com) or PowerReviews (www.powerreviews.com), the following metrics are important to consider:

- ✓ **Traffic:** The number of people visiting the community pages of your Web site is the first core metric. *Community pages* here means the discussion pages as well as the pages where you have customer reviews and ratings.
- ✓ **Members:** The next most important metric is the number of members of your community pages. These are the number of people that have registered so that they can publish content or share reviews. It's important to track whether the pace of people registering increases or decreases in time. You'll also want to understand who your most prolific contributors are and which have the most influence.
- ✓ **Interactivity:** The number of people who participate in a specific conversation, the number of replies, and the frequency with which they do so is very important. For example, how quickly on average someone replies to a conversation thread and the number of participants engaged in the conversation serve as guides to the health of your community.
- ✓ **Civility:** Another important metric to manage is how civil the conversations in your community are. Whether the community discusses health care or something simpler, such as digital cameras, how much people show that they trust and respect each other through the conversations is important. This can be ascertained by examining the language used, the tone of the conversation, and the way people express disagreement.
- ✓ **Content:** And last but not the least, no community can be measured without establishing metrics around the actual content. To understand your community better, you'll need to understand which pieces of content are the most popular, traffic-generating, and valued over time. You'll also want to understand what type of content is published and shared the most, whether that sharing is done on your Web site or to the social platforms.

Other metrics to consider

As you examine metrics on the major social platforms and analyze your SIM score, be sure to account for activity on the other social platforms. You'll want to track the following information about them:

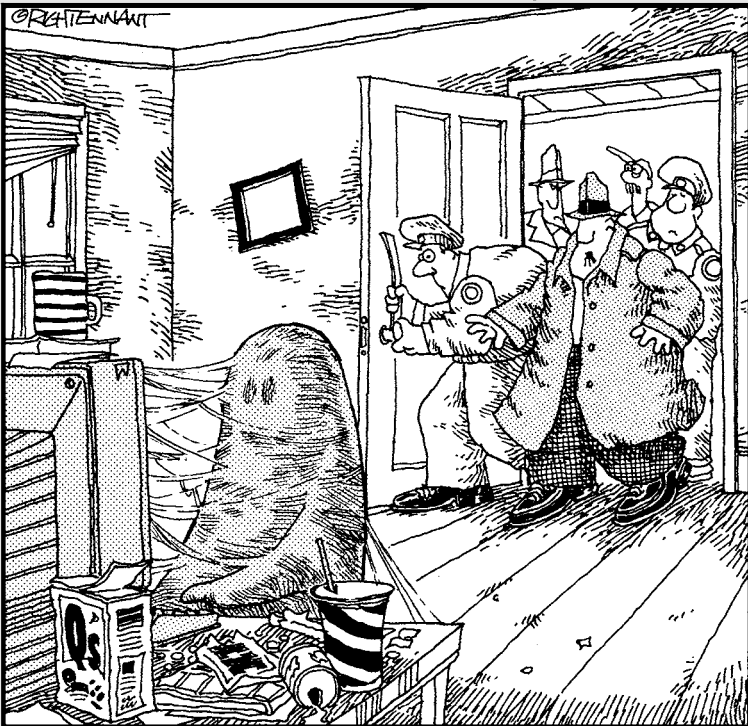
- ✓ How much your brand and its associated Web sites are bookmarked on sites like Delicious (www.delicious.com) and Flickr (www.flickr.com)
- ✓ Alexa (www.alexa.com), Compete (www.compete.com), and Quantcast (www.quantcast.com) rankings
- ✓ Brand mentions in discussion forums and on other community Web sites, like CafeMom and the microblogging service FriendFeed (www.friendfeed.com)
- ✓ The number of friends and brand mentions on other social network sites that may have a larger presence in other countries around the world, including
 - Bebo (www.bebo.com)
 - A Small World (www.asmallworld.net)
 - Flixter (www.flixter.com)
 - hi5 (www.hi5.com)
 - LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)
 - LiveJournal (www.livejournal.com)
 - MySpace (www.myspace.com)
 - Xanga (www.xanga.com)
 - Orkut (www.orkut.com)

Part III

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Awww jeez – I was afraid of this. Some poor kid, bored with the usual chat lines, starts looking for bigger kicks. Pretty soon they're surf'in' the seedy back alleys of Facebook, and before you know it they're into a profile they can't get out of. I guess that's why they call it the Web. Somebody open a window!"

In this part . . .

Count down to SIM success with these two lists of ten. Chapter 7 lists ten key SIM best practices that you must absolutely pay attention to. Chapter 8 includes ten common mistakes — mistakes made by the best of us who have been practicing SIM time and again.

Chapter 7

Ten SIM Best Practices

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Social influence marketing efforts may fail for a lot of reasons. And not surprisingly, hundreds if not thousands of articles are online about why certain SIM efforts failed. Strangely, there's a lot less discussion about what succeeds and why. I certainly don't have all the answers, but what I do know is that by following these ten best practices, your chances of success are much greater.

Open Up Your Brand to Your Consumers, and Let Them Evolve It

This is difficult for many marketers. You've probably spent money and time building your brand only to have someone telling you to let go of it. This may sound absurd. The truth is that the more you let your consumers internalize your brand, talk about it in their own language, and manifest your story in their own way, the more success you will have with your SIM efforts.

Letting your consumers evolve your brand doesn't mean you're losing control of it completely. How you let consumers evolve your brand must be done in a fashion that is in sync with your company values, what your customers expect of you, the industry you operate in, and the appropriateness for your brand. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't let go at all. Brands that hold onto too much mystique run the risk of appearing cold, distant, and alienating. Those risks are accentuated now with the social Web, so be careful, even if you're Chanel or Louis Vuitton.

Develop a SIM Voice without Silencing Other Voices that Support Your Brand

Surprisingly, for every brand that's fearful about opening up to consumers, just as many go the other extreme and inadvertently silence external voices. Your SIM voice is fundamentally about having a mechanism to talk to your consumers in a language and style that they understand. It's a voice to talk to them in a more humane and personal manner.

You shouldn't use your SIM voice to speak the loudest and most exclusively about your brand. Nor should you use it to silence your critics in a heavy-handed manner. To develop a strong SIM voice is to develop strong listening skills, a thick skin, and a nuanced understanding of how to respond to the fuming blogger, for example, without turning him off completely. You want to extend your reach and influence through others. Don't try to do so by being the loudest or by becoming deaf. No one likes a bully.

Respond to Everything, Even If It Means You're Up All Night

For all the hype about social media, one important sobering fact remains: It takes an immense amount of work. Listening in on conversations, even with monitoring tools, is an exhaustive, time-consuming exercise. Responding to and participating in those conversations can take the wind out of your sails and ruin many a weekend, if not a marriage. Arguably, many people think that social influence marketing isn't scalable because the larger your company is, the more expensive it gets to participate.

But that's the wrong way to think about social influence marketing. Your consumers are talking about you every day across many different channels and platforms. Their attention has become a lot more fragmented, and they're much more impatient, too. The only option is to work harder for

their attention and their dollars. If you have to set expectations around the timeliness of your participation, do so, but definitely don't ignore them. For example, a two-day delay in response hurt the Motrin brand immeasurably when customers felt that Johnson & Johnson wasn't hearing their concerns about a Motrin TV advertisement. Now those marketers at J&J thought they were ahead of the game by responding on Sunday evening, but that, too, was too late. To assist in managing responses, you need to build relationships online with influencers before you need them. That way, they can do some of the work for you while you go offline.

Think Beyond the Obvious and Use SIM to Evolve Your Business

To assume that social influence is just about marketing is to take a narrow view of it. The way your consumers communicate, share information, collaborate, entertain, get entertained, work, and do anything has fundamentally changed. People are influencing each other in new ways all the time and using social technologies to change their lives.

As a marketer in an organization, it's important to recognize that SIM can do more than just help you reach your consumers better. You can learn from your consumers by harnessing their insights about your products and brands; you can change how you conduct customer service or launch new products; and you can change how you interact with your own employees, shareholders, business partners, and external constituents. You can even use it to redefine your core products. Don't miss the opportunity to leverage SIM concepts for every part of your business.

Focus Not Just on Social Media but on Social Influencers

It's easy to lose sight of your social influencers amid the buzz about social media. There's no question that social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube are hugely popular, and they're changing the way people interact with

each other online and approach entertainment. But this isn't just about marketing on those social platforms. After all, consumers don't always respond to brands that dwell on them. They'd rather spend their time talking to one another. That's why it's important to focus on the social influencers, too, as they can reach the consumers for you.

It's important to focus on the social influencers, as they're the ones who increasingly have the largest impact on brand affinity and purchasing decisions. They are the ones who have the most influence on your consumers. They're everywhere, and not just on the social media platforms. By ignoring these social influencers, you're ignoring your largest and most potent sales force. Look beyond the buzz of social media and focus on the social influencers, wherever they may be, interacting with your consumers.

Structure Your Marketing Department for This Social World

Undoubtedly, the Internet and the social media revolution have changed marketing significantly. It's no longer about creating cool, creative ads and pushing messages out to customers via different channels. Nor is it just about print advertisements and in-store displays that may or may not grab the attention of your consumers. It's about a two-way conversation — online and offline — and looking holistically at how all your marketing efforts — digital or not — can work together.

And this begs the question, have you structured your marketing department appropriately for this world? You probably have interactive marketing in one corner of your department organizational chart. But can you still separate interactive marketing from the rest of marketing? Does it make sense? And along similar lines, should you silo market research from product innovation and brand and direct-response marketing when you live in a world with real-time customer feedback? It might be time for you to revisit your marketing department's organizational structure.

Take Your Organization with You, from the CEO to the Field Representative

I discuss in this book how you can apply SIM to different parts of your business and beyond the realm of marketing. I also cover strategies and tactics for making SIM work in conjunction with the other forms of marketing, whether they're digital or offline. But that isn't enough. To succeed in SIM means that you must carry your whole organization with you — everyone from the CEO down to the field representative.

SIM is fundamentally about everyday influence in all its forms and crowd-sourced innovation and product design. To embrace SIM and succeed in it requires your whole organization to orient itself toward it. Your CEO is probably one of the best spokespersons for your organization. He should be one of the people talking to your consumers in a SIM voice that they appreciate, wherever they may be spending their time online. On the other end of the spectrum, your field representatives are out there selling products. Each of them has a network of customers. They, too, are powerful SIM voices. Empower them to speak on behalf of the company to their constituents offline *and* online. Succeeding in SIM means taking everyone in your company in this direction. And a good place to start is by surveying your own employees to understand how much they're using social media today and how they feel it can be harnessed to support your business.

Conduct Many Small Tests Frequently and Build on Each One

Without a doubt, the field of social influence marketing is young. The social advertisement formats are still evolving; companies are just figuring out how to participate in the

conversation; customers are discovering how powerful a voice they have online; and the technologies that allow all this to happen and be tracked are in a constant state of flux.

Knowing how to practice SIM and for what specific purposes may not always be easy. The government might have started to regulate blogger outreach programs in your industry, for example (as it recently has with the pharmaceuticals). The only way to succeed in SIM is to conduct many small tests and build on each one. Don't try to boil the ocean all at once, and don't be frozen with paranoia either. Put a strategy in place that means many small, logical steps, each one building on the success of the previous one, deepening your relationships with the influencers and establishing yourself more deeply with your consumers. It takes longer to get where you want to, but it's a safer path to take.

Capture Every Single Piece of Data that You Can

You can measure a lot of your social influence marketing efforts. SIM is meant to support your overall marketing and business objectives, and you'll know whether it's succeeding in helping you accomplish those only if you're measuring your campaigns, initiatives, and strategies. Everything must be tied to results.

The only way to do that with rigor is to capture every single piece of data that you can about your SIM efforts. From the number of influencers activated to how many views a YouTube clip got that translated into a sale and the brand attitudinal lifts you saw based on a SIM campaign, you must capture all that data. Don't forget about capturing data that supports other parts of your business, such as a reduction in customer service calls or the amount of time it takes to bring products to market, if you've brought customers into your product innovation process. Data is everything.

Make Mistakes, but Make Every Effort to Correct Them as Well

We all learn from our mistakes, and that's a wonderful thing. But when practicing SIM, it isn't enough to learn from your mistakes — you also need to make every effort to correct them. And quickly, too. One of the many attributes that make SIM stand out from other forms of marketing is that you're engaging with your customers in real time as they interact with each other on a scale never seen before.

This means that both the good and bad of your brand (or marketing efforts) can be amplified across the Internet in no time, potentially causing either immense benefit (witness the viral effect of a funny YouTube clip) or immense damage (as Comcast experienced a few years ago). This means that when you make a mistake — and you will, as everyone does — be sure to make every effort to correct it as soon as possible. Otherwise, you'll find yourself in a crisis that spins completely out of your control.

Chapter 8

Avoiding Ten Common Mistakes

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You may follow all the right steps with your social influence marketing efforts and still fail. In fact, however frightening it may seem you may fail completely. The reason is that you may overlook the ten common mistakes of SIM. Steer clear of common mistakes in this chapter, and you have a better chance at enjoying a successful social influence marketing campaign.

Encroaching on Customers' Time

Many companies forget that their customers can have a limited number of conversations at once. They often gravitate to specific social platforms for coincidental reasons, but once they're on them, it's hard to move away. They become accustomed to that social environment, invest in it through their contributions, and bring their friends on board.

Any company thinking of starting a conversation with its customers must begin by asking where its customers currently spend their time, how willing they might be to move their conversations to a new location, and whether they can manage another set of conversations. If you don't think this through before you build something, you may have an empty community.

Your Customers Don't Want to Hear You

The social Web is fundamentally about people talking to each other about subjects that are of interest to them. It isn't designed to be a marketing vehicle. However, some brands naturally have permission, in a manner of speaking, to be a part of those conversations, while others may not. It's important to know whether your brand has that permission. Finding out whether your brand does have permission can be tricky, but the first step is to determine how you want to engage with your customers (what your social voice will be) and how much your customers trust your brand and are favorably inclined toward it. Then ask yourself whether your customers look to you for advice and information beyond the realm of the actual product that you sell. As you answer these questions, you'll discover whether your brand has the permission to participate.

For example, the Barbie brand celebrated its 50th anniversary in early 2009 and ran an extensive social influence marketing campaign. People were excited about the anniversary and welcomed Barbie into their conversations. There was a lot of passion and nostalgia associated with the brand. It was a natural fit for social influence marketing. People wanted to talk about it. But that may not always be the case. Ask yourself whether you have permission to practice SIM with your customers. In contrast to the Barbie example, a brand that has always been aloof, distant, and serious won't have the natural permission to start participating in online conversations in a personal, humorous, and light fashion. It would seem that the brand has been hijacked and customers won't respond favorably to that. That's an example of a brand not having permission.

Choosing the Wrong SIM Voices

It's critical to choose your SIM voices carefully. Don't assign the job to an employee who lacks communication skills or passion for the social Web. And don't choose someone who can't commit the time and effort that it requires to be a SIM voice. This person needs to know the social platforms like the back of his hand. He needs to be willing to invest the time to participate and respond to queries.

Companies that have chosen employees who lack authenticity as their SIM voices are rarely successful. In the case of Whole Foods Market, the CEO was blogging and commenting in discussion forums. The only problem was that he was doing it under a pseudonym and bashing his competitors. The truth surfaced, and he lost all credibility. As a result, be careful whom you choose to be your SIM voices and train them on how to be a SIM voice. This may seem obvious, but you'll be surprised how many obvious mistakes are made around SIM voices.

Not Being Patient

With SIM efforts, it can be difficult to know when it may *break out* (in other words, when your SIM effort may suddenly gain immense traction). Many a marketer has cancelled a SIM effort too quickly, only to see a competitor launch something six months later that turned out to be wildly successful. Be patient with your SIM effort; it may not be a runaway success on day one or day even one hundred. It could take longer.

With these efforts, recognize that SIM isn't a campaign, rather it's a commitment. Because you're working on the social Web, you're marketing to customers one at a time in a personal, engaging, and conversational manner and that doesn't always happen quickly. Your goal, always, is to get the customers to do the marketing for you. But it may take longer than you'd like. That's something to always recognize. And to do this right, when you start your SIM effort, convince your bosses that it needs to be a 6–12 month commitment at least. If they get cold feet after the second week or the second month, you mustn't let them pull the plug on the effort.

Treating SIM in Isolation

Marketers who don't integrate their SIM activities are always bound to fail. The reason is simple: You can't market to customers in a conversational, personal, and transparent manner on the social platforms but then use a different language, style, and tone elsewhere. Your SIM activities must always complement existing marketing initiatives.

So whether the rest of your marketing efforts constitute display advertising, search engines, TV advertisements, print, outdoor media, advertising on mobile phones, or just a few of the these, make sure that you're thinking about how SIM works with those other marketing efforts. Ideally, each of those marketing initiatives should tie in with the SIM ones, as SIM strategies and tactics can be promoted and extended through these other advertising formats and mediums, too. This especially applies to mobile, where increasingly cell-phones allow for social influence in new and dynamic ways, with applications that integrate customer reviews and real-time polling for feedback.

Having Only One Approach

Another common mistake of SIM is to treat influencers the way you would treat a member of the press: showering them with attention, inviting them to exclusive launches, and peppering them with press releases. The reality is that influencers in the SIM world are different, and it's important to be aware of those nuances. Otherwise you'll turn them off.

For example, expert influencers who share a lot in common with the mainstream media press would *still* rather not be treated like the press. They want the special attention but expect you to engage with them on their own terms, recognizing the boundaries that they operate in. Many of them now publish guidelines for marketers explaining how they want to be approached. Referent influencers have never been marketed to in the past, and they usually don't know what to expect or how best to manage expectations. And the positional influencers would much rather you not even know that they're a big influence on the customer. So when you market to the influencers, think carefully about the influencer type and how to appropriately market to them.

Thinking of SIM as a Channel

Marketers who treat SIM as a channel have the least success. The reason is that you aren't pushing the message through a channel, as you would in traditional advertising. If you use traditional advertising strategies on the social platforms, you

won't get the results that you're looking for. Think of social influence marketing as truly a new form of marketing with new strategies, best practices, and rules of engagement.

Don't Plan for the Worst

If you don't plan for the fact that you'll probably face a PR crisis at some point or other when you practice social influence marketing, you'll be blindsided when it does happen. Now, not every SIM activity results in a PR crisis — most never do at all. But because you're engaging with your customers in a more direct, authentic fashion, there are risks that you may not see with traditional advertising.

The risks take two forms:

- ✓ **The actual structure of a SIM campaign:** You may ask users to do something, and they may respond to that negatively. Or a small part of the responses may be so inflammatory in nature that it may undermine the campaign, or your brand.
- ✓ **Unintentionally elicit a visceral reaction:** This was the case with the infamous Motrin episode in early 2009, when moms responded extremely negatively to what they considered to be a derogatory TV advertising campaign. The campaign launched on a Saturday, and the marketers didn't notice the firestorm and respond quickly enough. Make sure that you do your scenario planning so that you know how to respond to any different crisis that may arise.

Focusing on One Large Campaign

Social influence marketing is fundamentally about many little efforts that when strung together have as much impact (usually much more) as a single traditional campaign or marketing program. This means that it's always important to plan to launch several small initiatives at once, rather than run one long, mammoth one.

This matters more than ever because your customers are doing a lot of digital snacking. They hop from one platform to another, exchange notes about something in one social network, and then move on to view a video clip, and sometimes go offline for days on end. Putting all your eggs in one basket doesn't serve you well.

Forgetting to Reward Your Participants

You must incentivize, reward, and recognize the contributions of the community. This may seem obvious, but you'll be surprised how many marketers assume that consumers will participate generously without any return. Make sure you match the reward to the level of participation you demand. These rewards don't have to be monetary in nature, but if you're asking something extra of the community that surrounds your product, you better be willing to thank them for their contributions, reward them for their participation, and recognize how they're changing your company for the better. These rewards can be as simple as invitations to special events, discount coupons, featuring customers on your Web site, and sneak peeks of new products and services.



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