BRINK

A Social Media Guide from the Edge
Hi.

I think I know why you’re here. Let me guess?

You’re a long-time marketer, and you are here because you’ve heard a lot of rumors about “that Social Media stuff” and wonder if it’s time to explore it for your company?

Or, you’re already way out in front of the Social Media wave. You are hoping that this e-book either has something new in it for you, or is at least good enough to forward along to your curious corporate colleagues? Maybe with a personal note along the lines of, “Check this out ... we should talk about some of the possibilities?”

Yes, Traditional Marketer, you should probably be exploring Social Media for your company. And yes, Social Media Smarty-pants, there may be some choice nuggets in here for you, and you can definitely forward along this e-book. I’ll try not to let you down.

My goal is to touch on some of the fundamental concepts related to Social Media, but in a tactical way that will help you get your hands dirty right away. All in under 40 pages. (You probably just skim all those Social Media Marketing books anyway, right? So we’ll just hit the highlights.)

Before we get started: who am I? My name is Todd Defren. I am a blogger and a principal at a PR agency, SHIFT Communications. I’m credited with “inventing” the Social Media News Release and the Social Media Newsroom. And SHIFT is a 100-person agency that works with tech clients like Quantum and with consumer brands such as Canadian Club Whisky and Virgin Mobile. All of our clients engage SHIFT for a hybrid of Public Relations and Social Media Marketing designed to engage the media, their customers and prospects. They trust us. You probably can, too.

Ready? Let’s go.
First let’s talk about the basic principle: "Participation Is Marketing"

If you noticed that a company that was known for its barely navigable website and/or hellacious phone system was suddenly taking an active, helpful, human role towards consumers, would you be impressed? Would you be more favorably inclined to their brand if you could tell they were listening to you? Of course you would.

But being “human” towards customers was, if not impossible, than at least not lucrative: before the Social Media era, being “human” did not scale very well. If a big company offered superior service, their happy customers would appreciate it, but they’d be unlikely to spread the goodwill. Only unhappy customers are particularly vocal. But in an online world, a company can be seen and noticed as being responsive, even by non-customers (a.k.a. prospective customers). This makes the pursuit of “good karma through good service” more worthwhile and lucrative.

And the same goes for Marketing. Social Media Marketing is ultimately about creating an environment where good karma prevails. This is an unprecedented opportunity to be very visible in your care & feeding of your customers. How helpful can you be to the people who care about, detest, or are just being introduced to your brand for the first time?

This is an important question. In the online world, your brand is exposed. Your actions, interactions, and reactions (not to mention inaction) are being watched, critiqued – and cataloged forever by Google! When Frank Eliason (also known as @ComcastCares on Twitter) helps out a customer, he does so in a very public forum: his patience and sticktoitiveness has engendered influential fans worldwide. Likewise, when a local videographer documents rats scurrying across the floor of a Taco Bell outlet, the problems of that single franchise can become a phenomenon that wallops the fast food company’s global reputation.

But do companies “get it,” yet? Last year, I decided to do a quick spot check on one major brand: if I could identify a situation in which it was obvious that the brand would benefit by participating with engaged consumers, would they already be doing so?
I chose BMW at random. Here was the process...

At the time of my research, a Google search on “BMW” brought up organic search result #8: AutoBlog. Specifically, “Posts from the BMW Category at AutoBlog.” (Please note how surprising it is that a blog popped up in the first 10 Google search results for a major brand. This occurs with increasing frequency.)

Regardless of its impressive organic search ranking, is AutoBlog worth paying attention to? Let’s check Technorati. “There are 285,004 links to this URL” (rank 56). Out of over 50,000,000 blogs, AutoBlog is #56? That’s pretty darned good.

At the time of my search, the most recent post in the BMW category at AutoBlog referred to a “spy shot” regarding the BMW 1-Series Coupe. The article had over 20 comments, and several inbound blog links. Not a vast wave of consumer interaction, but – given AutoBlog’s overall site traffic – it’s not trivial volume, either. A quick scan of some of the other BMW postings at AutoBlog showed a fairly consistent amount of user interaction...

Clearly there is an active community congregating at AutoBlog’s BMW site, even if at first glance the number of active users is relatively small. We can extrapolate from the site’s excellent Google placement and Technorati rank that anyone searching for “BMW” on the web might quickly find this site.

Thus the opportunity. I read through several posts and comments, and did not note anyone from BMW participating in this community. But how cool would it be for these brand enthusiasts to interface directly with a real-live-human BMW representative on a regular basis? How grateful would regular visitors to Autoblog be, if they occasionally scored some exclusive content, to share with their friends? Wouldn’t this not only cement the loyalty of current fans but also show the thousands of random visitors to the highly-trafficked blog that BMW truly cared about its customers and prospective buyers??
If you’re not paying attention to what’s being said about your brand within the Top 10 search results, how can you claim to be “engaged?”

Of course there are challenges for any company – even of BMW’s size – to scale and train and monitor a group of “community managers” that could serve as adjuncts to the marketing group. Also I acknowledge that this was an unscientific approach. For all I know, BMW is engaging “big-time” in other parts of the blogosphere.

BMW’s “failure” in this experiment, was not taking advantage of an easily-identified opportunity to engage, consistently, in a place that is so prominently impacting their brand.

If you’re not paying attention to what’s being said about your brand within the Top 10 search results, how can you claim to be “engaged?”

Google is every brand’s new homepage. Just ask Spirit Airlines: the #5 organic search result at the time of this writing? A blog post that says “Do Not Fly Spirit Airlines,” which was so poorly handled by the company that it spawned all kinds of trouble.

Participation is Marketing. The better the participation – in terms of tone, responsiveness and frequency – the better the marketing. Think about what the customers want to hear, not what you want them to hear. (And certainly not what you want them to buy. Social Media is not the right forum for a sales pitch. If you work on building loyalty to your brand’s personality, sales will follow in due course.)

So, if “participation” is the goal, how do you get started?

Google is every brand’s new homepage.
Making an Entrance into Social Media

It used to be that consumers tried to impact brands via letter-writing campaigns, boycotts, etc. Note that these activities tended to be activist and negative: that’s because it took a concerted effort to gain any attention. Thus, only the truly disgruntled gave it a go; happy customers tended to just keep quiet and go about their business.

But in the era of Social Media, everyone has a say. This can be good or bad for the brand ... it’s now just as easy for fans as enemies to get involved online. Either way the brand has no choice in the matter: whether the brand manager participates in the conversation has little bearing on whether or not a conversation is going to happen.

Smart companies tend to decide it’s better to participate than not. Some of these companies decide to get dolled-up for the conversation; rather than engage consumers in a low-key, value-oriented way, their Old School marketing mindset suggests to them that they need immediate awareness and ROI. Thus they try to enter the fray with a strategy that turns heads. Maybe it’s with a branded social-networking site; or a glitzy Facebook or MySpace page; or a swarm of freshly-minted community managers...

The problem with this approach is that it begs for immediate attention, and anyone who’s watched a blowhard burst into a cocktail party knows that some folks are attracted to the alpha personality, and some folks cringe with distaste.

When you’re online, those reactions (good and bad) are instantly visible. Some folks will applaud the big, noisy Social Media debut. But some will carp about “what took you so long?” ... “why so fancy-schmancy?” ... “who the f** do you think you are?” ... “who let the freakin’ marketers in?” ... etc.

Are you ready for that kind of unbridled criticism? Would you be disappointed to find that your good intentions were completely lost in the frenzy of comments about your wayward, self-interested Social Media policies?
This is not a call for brands to defer their entry into Social Media spheres. There are many large companies currently researching and developing plans for Social Media campaigns. I applaud their enthusiasm.

But, go slow. Listen first. Then, listen again. Use free tools like BlogPulse to ascertain who’s talking about your brand (and similar industry topics). You may find that the Big Plan developed 6-months ago is no longer relevant, since this space moves so darned fast.

Find out where your likely friends and skeptics are ... figure out how their opinions and tone changed over the past few months ... take an interest in what they talk about when you’re (ostensibly) not around.

Figure out how you might add value to their communities, without expecting an immediate Return on Investment. It may be anathema for a marketer to discount ROI considerations, but, it’s poisonous to your plans if regular folks figure out that that ROI equation is all you truly care about.

It’s not about making an impression. And it’s not about “impressions” in terms of website traffic. It’s about making friends. Friends who will tell you the truth. Friends who might someday buy your product, and tell their friends about it. Friends who might rally to your defense when you hit a rough patch.

Listen. Think. Listen. Act. (Slowly.)
Thoughts on Blogging

Along those same lines of “making an entrance” in Social Media, I get a lot of questions about blogging. “Should we blog?” is the most common question. The second most common question is, “Should our CEO be blogging?”

The answer to the first question is easy. As you’ll see later on in this e-book, I am a huge fan of Content Marketing, and “blogging” easily falls into that bucket. As for CEO bloggers? That’s trickier. There are political issues to consider. Maybe show the CEO this “open letter” below, first; see how they react, then decide?

Open Letter to the CEO Who Wants to Become a Blogger

Dear CEO,

It takes a lot of talent to rise to the CEO spot. You need to be confident and charming, smart and articulate. These are excellent qualities in a blogger, too!

As a CEO, I can understand why you’d be interested in “joining the conversation.” It’s an interesting conversation – after all, it’s a conversation about topics of interest to you and to your company, and the people you’ll interact with will self-identify themselves as being interested in what you’ve got to say.

Done well, you’ll get both personal satisfaction and bottom-line results from your foray into blogging.

Ha!! Caught ya. Were you nodding in agreement all the way through my li’l speech? Sorry but it’s not that easy. You need to explore your motivations and time commitments before you consider a dual career as a CEO-Blogger.

Too many would-be CEO bloggers treat their new toy as little more than a weekly newsletter; a way to broadcast their thoughts, rather than a way to create a dialogue. They expect that simply because they are the CEO, naturally people will be
magnetically drawn to their words. And then they are crushed to see “Comments (0)” after each post, and are mortified to see a wan Technorati ranking...

And then they give up, poo-pooing the ballyhooed blogosphere as they munch on sour grapes. Because they couldn’t tame the blogosphere, they lost interest. Now, all other blog-related projects at the company become suspect – after all, if THE CEO couldn’t hack it, who dares think that they could do better?

And thus a company loses a golden opportunity to engage with their customers and prospects.

But you’re not like that? You truly want to engage? Cool. Start by NOT blogging.

Don’t blog for at least one full month following your decision to start blogging. Instead, spend that time finding OTHER blogs in your industry. Read them. Comment judiciously. Leave your “agenda” on the coat-rack. Just get to know a few folks. Introduce yourself.

As the CEO, you’re probably accustomed to being noticed when you walk into an industry function. You may even have handlers to squire you to the centers of power in a conference hall. But, you wouldn’t presume that level of recognition and clout if you walked into a block party in a new neighborhood, eh? You’d hang back a little, insert yourself mildly into a wedge of conversation, and ingratiate yourself. You’d be a gentleman.

And yet there might still be moments of awkwardness. All the neighbors already know each other. There are cliques. There’s context, politics and in-jokes to figure out. You wouldn’t expect to be the life of the party right away. But, you knew that going in... so, to help grease the skids, you brought some nice bottles of wine and some of your killer BBQ ribs.

Same with blogging, Chief. Think of blogging as an extended block party. You’re certainly invited, but please don’t expect to be Mr. Popular right away. Giving freely of your attention in the form of commenting and linking liberally to your peers’
blogs is the equivalent of handing out your BBQ goodies. It could take YEARS, but sooner or later your neighbors will come to respect, expect and love your contributions.

Up for it? Awesome. Cover up the keyboard, lay aside your ambitions, start reading, and join the fun.

See, the CEO took it pretty well, eh? The good news is that the same advice offered to your CEO is just as applicable to anyone else in the company who may be up to the blogging challenge.

But what about reaching out to external bloggers? That’s what MARKETING is all about, right? Blogger Relations! Getting some virtual “ink!”

OK, sure, fine, yea – we can do that. But there are some rules of the road. Those rules will be discussed in the pages ahead, but FIRST, do yourself the favor of making sure that your “Blogger Relations” program is a coordinated one.

In large companies, “outreach to the bloggers” might mean different things to different people, and you run the risk of a very public embarrassment if you allow Blogger Relations programs to spring up willy-nilly. It is cool that you’re ready to engage in Blogger Relations. But are you sure that no one else in the company isn’t already doing it?

For example, it’s not hard at all to imagine the ounce of naiveté required for a marketing manager to consider a paid Blogger Relations campaign. They might not even think to check-in with the corporate PR department – they may give such a campaign no more weight than if they were crafting a new piece of direct mail! To the unsophisticated marketer who’s been doing Corporate Marketing for 20 years, this “blogging stuff” may simply represent a new channel to exploit.

Does that prospect make you feel nervous? Good, it should. So here are some questions to get you started in your investigation:
Have official “rules of engagement” re: bloggers been documented and disseminated?

Have all marketing employees reporting to corporate marketing (and/or to a business unit) been educated on the “rules of engagement” re: external blogs?

Is there a chance that any of the business unit marketing groups have engaged in a paid or unpaid blogger relations campaign already?

If any of your marketing managers have paid bloggers to write about our products/services, did they require public disclosure of the relationship?

(If you dig up unsettling answers, start the process of disclosing any paid blogger relationships ASAP. You can worry about “what went wrong” later.)

By the way, do you truly already have “rules of engagement” when it comes to outreach to bloggers? The tips on the next page will get you started. It’s in the form of a bookmark, so you can print out the page and take a scissor to it. At SHIFT, there is a laminated version of this Blogger Relations Bookmark on every employee’s workstation.
Quick & Critical Tips

➔ Read at least 20 recent posts & comments.
  • Know the blogger’s personality & interests.
  • Reading comments is imp: provides a sense for the readership as well as the blogger’s engagement.
➔ Become part of the blogger’s community.
  • Participate in the comments section at very least.
  • Ideally your first “pitch” won’t be the first time they’ve heard from you.
➔ Bloggers are passionate experts ... No B.S. allowed!
  • No “carpet-bombing” – every pitch must be customized & relevant (as with media relations)!
  • If your pitch isn’t good enough to be published as is, don’t send it!
➔ Bloggers care about trackbacks, comments, authority
  • How will covering your news generate “linklove?”
➔ Bloggers are not journalists
  • Bloggers write about what they want to write about – your news may not be “newsworthy” to them, even if it seems to be “right up their alley.”
  • Bloggers are “amateurs” in that they are not required to check their facts, protect their sources, or be impartial!
➔ Bloggers exist in a community.
  • Bloggers often know who else you’re pitching; and, how you’ve been received by their peers.
➔ As with traditional journalists, bloggers will often want to offer a unique take on your news; got fodder?

Respect the power & the perils of the blogosphere

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 SharePoint
What’s it look like when you do a good job with Blogger Relations? What’s the value? Here are some good examples:

**Blogger Relations Case Study: Mommybloggers**

Just when you think that most agencies are starting to “get” Blogger Relations, a wave of bad examples pop-up.

Luckily, many conscientious PR bloggers have had the patience to explain best practices, and as an industry we can only hope for positive change (and/or some forbearance from justifiably cranky bloggers).

Meanwhile, we all cry out for case studies, eh? Here’s one of ours:

Our client, The NEAT Company, makes a handy portable scanner. Most of our work on the account, as you might expect, had been focused on businesspeople and, specifically, road warriors. “Go to a business lunch, then scan the receipt on the front seat of your rental car before you leave the parking lot; build your expense report as-you-go.” We got tons of ink for this straightforward pitch.

But one reporter whom we’d been talking to happened to leave her post at a techie outlet to join Martha Stewart Omnimedia. Wonder of wonders, NEAT received a high-profile hit with Martha Stewart: which promptly caused the NEAT scanner to hit #1 on Amazon.com, swamping the company’s e-commerce system for a day.

Between the Martha Stewart coup and a few subsequent “lifestyle” hits, we quickly figured out that this sleek li’l scanner was a hit with stay-at-home mothers who needed an easy way to capture their kids’ drawings, their household receipts, family recipes, etc. Lo! A new market was born.
SHIFT set its sights on the influential, ever-growing niche of “mommybloggers.” The problem was that everyone and their mother (pun intended) seemed to have discovered the breadth and power of this blogging niche. As a result, many of the mombloggers were being swamped with inane spam from pushy PR folk. We needed to be especially careful and conscientious in our outreach.

After several weeks of research, we identified a niche-within-the-niche. Whereas most mommy blogs are, appropriately, about “being a mom,” there is a narrow slice of sites written by some seriously geeky, gadget-loving moms. Rather than hit-up all mombloggers widely, we narrowcasted our approach to a handful.

Stage One – “listening” – was a core component to the research. Our list of 10+ “gadget-lovin’ mommas” was whittled down to 3, once we realized that 7 out of our top-ten didn’t seem likely to appreciate our type of gadget or approach.

Stage Two incorporated respectful outreach, either via email or via the Comments section of the mombloggers’ sites. In the end, each of the three bloggers drafted nice reviews of the NEAT scanner.

But Stage Three was what differentiated this campaign from most other programs.

Most PR agencies would have been justifiably happy with these initial successes, marking it as a successful Blogger Relations effort. We decided to push the envelope.

We re-approached the three mommybloggers with a proposition: we’d give each of them 10 scanners to give away to their readers in a contest. To qualify, their readers would need to either:

a) leave a comment about “why I’d love to win a NEAT scanner” at the mombloggers’ sites, or,

b) write a post on a blog of their own, with a trackback to the mommyblogger’s post which had inspired their entry. (This was generally preferred, as it contributed to the mommybloggers’ own Technorati ranking and overall search engine results.)
Our humble scanner lit up the mommysphere. Due to this single contest running on 3 sites, we generated over 80 follow-on blog posts about the NEAT Company’s scanner, and almost 1,200 reader comments about “what I’d do with a NEAT scanner.”

This information was pure gold to our client – who had not only recently discovered a new market opportunity, but now also had access to hundreds of pages’ worth of free, user-generated content and market research, which they could use to inspire future product development and messaging ideas.

Beats paying thousands of dollars for a focus group.

Here’s another example of some great results from Blogger Relations:

In July 2008, our client, a company named MobileSphere, planned to introduce a new product named “slydial” to market. Slydial is a free service that allows you to directly leave a voicemail message on a friend’s cellphone, without generating a ringtone. A great service for avoiding awkward conversations!

As befits such an appealing service, the blogger targets ranged from business and tech bloggers to lifestyle bloggers, teen, and gossip bloggers. We created custom angles for each of these distinct targets, and individualized every single pitch to meet the proven interests of each writer: the typical TechCrunch reader is a different animal than a Perez Hilton reader, after all!

We also distributed a social media news release (SMR) that included multimedia (videos, etc.) to all of our blogger contacts. The SMR included enough standalone, rich content that bloggers could post directly from the SMR without needing an interview, if that was their preference.

“The combo of mainstream PR and Social Media results boosted slydial’s base of 5,000 private alpha users to more than 200,000 public beta users in less than two weeks.”
The results? In one month of blogger outreach, slydial was covered in 381 blog posts. These results were the direct result of our outreach, combined with the viral effect that those initial, high-profile posts had in the blogosphere. These hundreds of posts were just as varied as the many pitches that were sent out.

The diversity and influence of the resulting coverage ranged from TechCrunch (tech blog) and Perez Hilton (gossip blog) to Asylum (men’s blog) and Popgadget (a tech-focused women’s blog). We even got significant mentions of slydial on The Today Show and The View! And last but not least, because Howard Stern’s bride is a Perez Hilton devotee, the radio shockjock discussed slydial as well, to his millions of listeners!

These myriad posts (as well as traditional media coverage) hit consumers from all angles. The combo of mainstream PR and Social Media results boosted slydial’s base of 5,000 private alpha users to more than 200,000 public beta users in less than two weeks.

“This Don’t Want to Talk About It? Order a Missed Call” The New York Times

“Created Just for Casanova Chickens” Perez Hilton

“Slydial Extends the Power of Voicemail” U.S. News

“Asylum -- The Straight to Voicemail Sanctuary” Asylum

This significantly exceeded MobileSphere’s goals for the program. Since MobileSphere tracked new users on a daily basis, it could correlate the coverage spikes to the spikes in new users – showing the direct impact the program had on its business goals.

Hopefully you are now convinced that reaching out to “those crazy bloggers” might indeed be worthwhile. But when you think about Social Media, remember that it’s not all about blogs. In fact, your company’s online participation can possibly be successful without an ounce of “outreach.”
Empower & Inspire with Content Marketing

You work in Marketing. Let’s say that among your tasks is netting a few juicy speaking opportunities for your company’s top executive.

You fill out the forms. Follow-up. Nail the gig. A keynote, no less! Yay!

Prior to the event, you draft a Media Advisory about the CEO’s upcoming speech. You ping members of the media who will be in attendance: “want to hook up with the CEO for lunch after her speech?”

You attend the keynote with the CEO. You take notes on her speaking points: these could be the crumbs of a new trend pitch...

Immediately after her speech, you scurry about the auditorium, scanning for green press badges. Maybe you can drum up an extra briefing or two — or three!

After it’s all done, you have a drink and rub your aching feet in the airport lounge. Job well done, mission accomplished.

Sure: yesterday that would have been enough. Yesterday that would have netted you an “atta boy” from the CEO.

Tomorrow, though, that plan of action will not be enough. “Tomorrow” you will do ALL OF THE ABOVE, plus, in the dawning age of Content Marketing, you’ll want to:

- Interview the CEO in the car on the way to the event, with your Flipcam.
- Hustle the CEO into a quiet conference room for an impromptu podcast.
- Document hallway chatter and interview the conference attendees before/after the CEO’s keynote speech (“What are you hoping to hear today? Did the speech meet expectations?”).
• Film or livestream and/or liveblog/tweet the speech itself... while monitoring and responding to other tweets by fellow conference attendees.
• Share this content all along the way, and monitor responses; interacting directly with users; answering questions, etc.

Note again that these “tactics from tomorrow” are not necessarily targeted to “the media.” They are aimed at sharing fresh content, using it to empower “passalong sharing” and spur conversation and reactions across all sorts of interested stakeholders.

Such a “content engine” creates ongoing opportunities for attention and dialogue, plus, the constantly-updated content stream aids in Search Engine Optimization.

Tomorrow's coming.

Think MULTI Media

One of the benefits of living in a Boston suburb is that you meet smart people wherever you go. Even on the neighborhood soccer field – where I share cheering duties with Frank Cutitta, the General Manager of IDG Connect. Our talented daughters are on the same soccer team.

IDG Connect is an “information technology resource for the latest research and product information in the IT Industry. The library includes technical white papers, webcasts, podcasts, case studies and product information.”

According to Frank, IDG’s figured out how to help marketers meet the expectations of prospects who are seeking various levels and types of information, about industries and products.

“You need to understand the buyer’s precise knowledge needs. What does your buyer expect at each stage of the purchase process?” Frank explains. “Once you know that, you can optimize content in the best format to match the buyer’s learning style.”
In other words, you may need to create a white paper and/or a podcast and/or a videoblog and/or a webcast of the same content because different types of prospects will have different engagement preferences.

It all starts with a “content asset audit.” With an average tenure of just under two years, most corporate marketing executives can't even find most of the content on file at the corporation, much less map it to a strategy. Think, “random acts of content.”

> “Once content assets are cataloged, marketers need to map assets into a sequential lead nurturing ‘curriculum,’ i.e., moving prospects through a series of content-focused engagements - each of which signify a higher degree of complexity/value and a closer proximity to sale,” Frank notes.

Here’s an example of that “sequential lead nurturing” ...

Rather than create a 45-minute webcast (zzzz), why not create smaller content bundles delivered in "chapters?" A 2-minute introductory webcast can lead to the prospect “graduating” to a more in-depth 10-minute video demo or a slideshow, and so on... Each request for the “next in the series” signals additional movement through the sales funnel, and can be tracked accordingly (which videos work best? which are responsible for the most drop-offs?).
Let’s get tactical.

Say you head up marketing for a CAD/CAM software maker. Various types of buyer types (and purchase influencers) come to mind: design engineers, CTOs, CEOs, pencil-pushers from purchasing, etc.

What content marketing strategy can you employ to meet the highly variable information needs of these audiences, across different stages of the purchase process?

Well, design engineers and CTOs are a technical audience, right? They are likely going to want to see white papers and demo-style webcasts. But, these folks are also on-the-go and of many different industries, so you might also want to develop a podcast series that literally talks them through your product demo, in chapters that synch-up to the prospects’ needs. You can also “verticalize” the content, by making tweaks that speak to specific industries. Spice it all up by asking a couple of customers to submit to interviews that you can splice into the dry stuff.

Now, you’ve got those customer interviews on-hand, and you realize that CEOs and Purchasing execs who don’t understand what your product does will still appreciate assurances of your product quality, viability and customer support! If you’ve got those customer interviews on video, these snippets can become part of a vlog; they can be emailed by salespeople during the courtship; etc.

And if part of your strategy does include white papers and other text-based content, be sure to offer both prettified PDFs as well as “atomized” HTML versions. The former can be printed or forwarded to old-school executives, whereas the “atomized” version ensures that bloggers and/or prospects can point their readers and colleagues to specific datapoints that help them make the case for your CAD/CAM solution.

The right content delivered to the right people, at the right spot in the sales cycle. Sounds so simple, right?
Produce, Propagate, Promote: Grease the Skids for Your Content

Are you with me so far?

Now I want to talk about the spread of your message. It’s no fun to talk to yourself, right?

When discussing Content Marketing, or the broader realm of Social Media Marketing for that matter, one of the major benefits is related to the propagation of content.

By atomizing the different content elements (offering “small chunks” of multimedia such as graphics, video, podcasts), you empower people to appropriate and re-use that content as they see fit. **Ideally this leads people to see your content in their own online hang-outs, “socialized” by the fact that their friends and/or favorite sites are making the introductions.** And if they re-mix your content, all the better: they’ll be further motivated to share it online.

But, they’re not always going to do that: so it is entirely conceivable that you’ll spend a boatload of time and $$$ creating content that stalls out in your online newsroom (which would stink).

That means it’s up to you to spread the *word* by spreading the *content*.

**Some principles and ideas to consider:**

Make sure your content is not solely posted in your online newsroom.

- If you are making photos or short videos available, why not post them to Flickr, as well, with tags that may make the content readily discoverable?
- If the videos are longer-form, how about posting them to a corporate YouTube channel?
- Might some of the photos also be worthy of sharing with your Twitter followers? – Twitpic ‘em!
• Is your podcast series **syndicated via iTunes**?
• Have you saved your news releases – along with each of the content elements shared across other social networks – to **del.icio.us**?
• Can you share that amazing keynote presentation or case study on **SlideShare**?
• Don’t forget the **Creative Commons licensing**: you don’t want to inadvertently block someone from sharing the content on their own blog (nor lose credit for the source material).
• If the news relayed in a news release is super important, maybe consider using **NewsAds** to drive relevant traffic? A little Search Engine Marketing never hurts.

Your content may be *lively*, but it’s not *alive*. Help it along. Evangelize.

Unless your company/client already possesses a base of rabid, highly-networked and vociferous fans, then simply publishing a press release to your website and/or via the newswires is *just not enough* to get any attention. Your fabulous content will lie fallow. A corporate RSS feed with paltry subscriber numbers ain’t gonna bring the fame.
What about Social Media Releases?

I don’t suppose I could write an e-book about Social Media Marketing without mentioning my “baby,” the Social Media Release (SMR).

What is a Social Media Release, in essence? A Social Media Release converts the 100-year old text-heavy press release into a blog post, with all of the cool functions of a blog – including multimedia, the ability to comment and aggregate inbound links, etc. SMRs can power a direct conversation with stakeholders about your news, give them the content elements to carry your message forward on their own. Cool, right?

But here’s a radical suggestion: don’t put any Social Media Releases out over the newswires.

While I sincerely applaud how far the wire services (BusinessWire, Marketwire, PRNewswire, et al.) have progressed in all-things-social, I am unconvinced that “distribution” is the Big Issue for Social Media Release adoption. The power of the Social Media Release is not about distribution, it’s about empowerment and conversation.
So I recommend you put out a well-written “traditional” release over the wires, with a built-in link to the “social media version” at the company’s online newsroom. Thus you can bypass the wire services’ outsized SMR fees without giving up on their distribution platform.

To do this, however, you first need to create a Social Media Newsroom, using a blogging engine.

The social media version of a press release, posted to a social media newsroom, can allow for everything from rippable multimedia (video, audio, graphics, etc.) to moderated comments. Additionally, with each news item posted as a blog entry, you can aggregate all conversational elements about that news in one spot, via trackbacks and other social media tracking tools.

This approach offers the added benefits of being a lot less expensive; maintaining full control of brand identity; and turns your newsroom’s “version” of the release into the truly official version.

With so much potential activity happening around each release, it’s more likely that anyone who writes about your news online will link directly to the newsroom, versus linking to the heretofore “official” release that comes from the professional news wires. This boosts SEO. (In fact, you might also consider an AdWords campaign to drive additional web traffic directly to your most important news releases.)

Socialized news, socialized content. It’s just so much more friendly!

Need examples? Here are Social Media Newsrooms from General Motors Europe, Cisco, Ford, Electrolux (and SHIFT)!
Edgework.

The scary stuff.

What do I mean by “edgework?”

“Edgework” is a fancy name for direct interaction with end-users. This is risky. Proceed at your own risk. Your mileage may vary.

“Traditional” PR/marketing pros tend to deal with a narrow band of professional influencers (i.e., the mainstream media and the better-known bloggers) - with whom there are unstated but well-known “rules of engagement.” Operating in this media-filtered world is like working at a zoo. Follow the rules and you’ll be okay; but poke the bear and you could lose an arm.

But “edgework,” direct contact with “the people,” carries all the risks you’d expect. You’re in the jungle where the Wild Things Are. In this realm you tread lightly and leave your big stick at home. This is about subtlety.

For the purposes of this e-book, we’ll talk about the two extremes of online consumers. There are “Digital Natives” who create content and engage daily via Facebook, Twitter, etc. And then there are “Spectators.” Forrester Research suggests that this latter group “reads blogs, watches user-generated videos (YouTube) and maybe listen to podcasts.” (But if they do all those things, it’s probably due to Google, i.e., because a blog popped up in a Google result, or because they found their way to YouTube to watch a funny kitten video and wound up surfing for other content of interest. These Spectators likely don’t think of themselves as “blog readers.”)
Reaching Digital Natives via Facebook

First off, some of the Facebook groups that marketers ought to check out, to increase (and share!) their general knowledge, include:

- **If I can help a reporter out, I will...** (now a standalone website, [http://www.helpareporter.com](http://www.helpareporter.com))
- **The Official Facebook Public Relations Group**
- **New Media**
- **Social Media Measurement**

There are also many mainstream publications with a Facebook presence, including the NY Times, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, BusinessWeek, etc. And reporters who are on Facebook? They include heavy hitters such as:

- **Ed Baig**, USA Today
- **Peter Burrows**, BusinessWeek
- **Melanie Wells**, Forbes
- **David Kirkpatrick**, Fortune
- **Jon Fine**, BusinessWeek

In other words, *whether you’re reaching out to bloggers, consumers or mainstream media, Facebook probably should be a consideration.*

However, in the case of these top-shelf business writers, you shouldn’t try to “friend” them if you don’t already have a relationship of some sort. Spam is spam, folks, whether in email or in the form of a “Super Poke.”

But we’re supposed to be talking about “edgework.” Forget about the biz press. How should you reach out **directly** to Facebook users?

At SHIFT, one approach we’re fond of can be summed up with a few basic principles:
**Identify appropriate groups.** This is easily accomplished via Facebook’s search engine (which, by the way, handles over 600 million searches per month!)

**Are there enough members to make outreach worthwhile? Are they active?** We define “active” by the frequency of new-member sign-ups, the volume and recency of discussions on the group’s Wall and Discussion Board, the volume and recency of uploads and shared posts, etc. So many Facebook Groups were started and abandoned on a lark (i.e., a waste of your time), so this part is critical.

**Research the Group Type.** Is it an “Open Group?” If so it tends to allow for more – and more diverse – users. Closed groups tend to be insular and neutral/hostile to outsiders. Leave ‘em be.

**Befriend the Admins.** Too many marketers simply join an Open Group and then post their items for all its members. Beyond the fact that this is basically spam, it lacks impact because the content is not coming from the group’s own members. Better to respectfully approach the Facebook Group Admins. It was their passion that started the group; they use their personal time to administer the community. Respect them like you’d respect a business reporter. Explain to them who you are, who you represent, and what you’d like to share with their community members. In simple language, with no hidden agenda.

If you’ve done your job right, your content is totally appropriate for their group. Ask if you can share/post your content to the Facebook Group –very often, these admins either agree or even volunteer to do it for you! This latter approach not only provides instant credibility, but also means that the content is not just posted to The Wall but can even be “pushed” to all Group members’ Facebook in-boxes. More credibility, more adoption, more results.

**Here’s a handy slide to remind you of what to look for when considering the appropriate Facebook Groups for your pitch (it’s linked to a Flickr jpeg):**
Of course, when it comes to the Digital Natives, it’s not all about Facebook or MySpace. There are a ton of really smart, highly-networked people on Twitter. (I need to assume that you are familiar with Twitter. If not there are many posts out there that can explain it all to you.)
Reaching Digital Natives via Twitter

How can brands interact with “The Twitterati” without coming off as too commercial?

Let’s say you work for Amazon.com, and you are tasked with gaining customers and grassroots “buzz” for the online retailer’s MP3 download offerings. You could start by using Twitter Search to find and “follow” people who had tweeted about some cool new indie bands. You could start a string of tweets directed at these fellow tweeters (using the @username function of the microblogging service) with news about upcoming cool concerts, links to free MP3s, factoids about up-and-coming artists, etc. By creating this community of “followed” folks, the community that might form could also more readily discover and follow each other...

Most twitterati I know can hardly resist the urge to check-out the profiles of any new “followers.” At your “AmazonMP3” Twitter profile page, they’d find a Web link pointing to the official Amazon MP3 microsite. Actually I’d recommend that Amazon.com create a beefed-up landing page for folks who find it via Twitter, e.g., with info on “Why is Amazon following me on Twitter?,” with polls (“What indie band will everyone be talking about next year?”), etc.

And “why is Amazon following me on Twitter?” – This could be easily explained on the official Amazon MP3 microsite:

“If you found this page because you saw that ‘Amazon is now following you on Twitter,’ it’s just because you once posted a tweet that talked about some cool music. If you love music, this site may be of interest: in fact, as a Twitter user, you can download up to 5 MP3s for free. If we got it wrong, though, we’re really sorry: just let us know through this web form and we’ll unfollow from your tweets within 48 hours. (No need to give us any personal info beyond your public Twitter name.) Thanks!”

Short, sweet, human.

Speaking of “human” ... Ideally there’s a true human personality behind the “AmazonMP3” account. It would be nice to introduce them, by name, via this beefed-up landing page. What’s their background? Favorite musicians? Last concert they attended? What “backstage pass” do they dream about nabbing one day?
Now, what should “AmazonMP3” tweet about? Because once “AmazonMP3” has started “following” a few dozen (or few hundred!) twitterers, we can assume that a decent handful will reciprocate and start “following” the Amazon employee’s tweets. A community will form. A community “founded” by Amazon’s rep, sure, yet also a community of people with similar passions who might also start to help each other out (e.g., with music discovery).

Here’s what @AmazonMP3 should NOT tweet about (at least, not too much): the Amazon MP3 service. Rather, the Amazon rep could use the “@AmazonMP3” account to microblog about music. If this becomes an Amazon commercial in execution, it’s a campaign that deserves execution – as in “death.”

Will MP3 sales soar at Amazon.com? Not clear. But will more and more people begin to think of Amazon.com as an authentic community member, worthy of their support, and sales? No doubt.

There is one more Web 2.0 service worth your consideration if you are jazzed by this “edgework” concept...
Reaching Digital Natives via Social Bookmarking

It’s called “social bookmarking,” a technology best represented by del.icio.us, a Yahoo property. You know how you “Add to Favorites” in the Internet Explorer browser or “Bookmark This Site” in Firefox? Same idea, but you do it in public, for others to find, follow and share.

It’s probably easiest to just provide some examples. I’ll start with a personal example, but then extrapolate it to a more generic example.

Look here and you see that 165 people used del.icio.us to save the news release we originally issued re: the Social Media News Release template. Look here and you see that you can add another 224 del.icio.us users who saved the template (pdf) itself. Likely there’s some overlap, but for now, figure that there are 200–odd people who have expressed genuine interest in the SMNR debut.

Now, look here and you see that just 84 people used del.icio.us to save my original blog post about SHIFT’s Social Media Newsroom template (pdf). And only another 62 folks saved the actual PDF. That gives us roughly 146 people who expressed an interest in the Newsroom.

The delta between the people interested in the templates for the Release vs. the Newsroom is at least 150. What to do?

We can use the “for:username” function of del.icio.us to add the relevant Newsroom links to the other 150+ del.icio.us accounts that had already saved the News Release template. The saved link will appear in these end-users’ del.icio.us “in-boxes” as a “Link for You.”

Before talking about what could happen next, a key issue is: how to approach writing the message to these strangers? Some might appreciate your gesture; some might see it as an intrusion. (Granted, del.icio.us is a SOCIAL – read: public – bookmarking service, yet some people could still take offense.)
Remember, you only get 255 character spaces with del.icio.us, so, keep it short & sweet, like so:

“Noticed you’d saved SHIFT’s Social Media News Release template. Thought you might also be interested in this Social Media Newsroom template. There’s a PPT available, which describes the whole approach, at shiftcomm.com. I’m at todd@shiftcomm.com.”

That’s 247 character spaces, in which we’ve explained HOW we found the person (relevancy), WHY we are “intruding,” and WHERE they can get more info if interested, including how to write back, for more info (or to kvetch).

It’s important to note that many people who use del.icio.us for personal reasons draft quick notes (to themselves and/or to the community) about WHY they saved the link. This allows for a more meticulous approach, i.e., if someone has noted that they dislike the Social Media News Release template, they shouldn’t get the generic note used above! We could ignore them, or try a softer approach.

Now what?

Once the outreach has been made via the “for:username” function, some folks on the receiving end of our campaign will elect to “accept” this link by actively saving it within their account (a metric you can track). Some folks will take further action: they might blog about it (measurable); they might download the template (measurable); they might comment at the original Newsroom’s debut blog post (measurable). They might email you directly (measurable). They might do nothing (also measurable).

In any event we can feel pretty confident that we’ve ONLY reached out to people who would likely be genuinely interested, based on their prior, public, social bookmarking behavior. If we’ve kickstarted the conversation about Social Media Newsrooms a-fresh, it’s likely going to be a smooth and productive transition with this crowd.

Harkening back to my statement that “your mileage may vary,” you should keep in mind that not all end-users will appreciate being reached out to in this way. But the approach I am discussing here allows the marketer to narrow their outreach based on identifiable, contextual and (I dare say) legitimate approaches: “You publicly saved THIS; you even publicly said WHY you saved it ... which makes me think you might like THIS.”
That doesn't sound so bad... it's certainly no more nefarious than the targeting techniques that big advertisers, political campaigns, et al. currently use to try to influence people.

**So, now, extend this approach with your own brand.**

What if you are a marketing exec at a company that sells digital cameras? How about checking out [this link](#) to see the most popular del.icio.us posts tagged with the phrase “digitalcamera.” You see that the top link is to the well-regarded blog, **Digital Photography Review**, which has been [saved by over 17,000 del.icio.us users](#).

Maybe that’s too many? Maybe you want to focus an “edgework” campaign on the cutting-edge Flickr community? Cool. The #2 most-saved link using the “digitalcamera” tag is this one: **Top 10 cameras on Flickr – Digital camera news – Logicamera.com**, which has been [saved by 111 people](#).

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**Example:** Perhaps your client is a big camera company, which wants to create a focus group for an upcoming “dummy-proof” dSLR by recruiting people who have publicly saved at least ten “digital photography 101–style” links.

First off, you could create a microsite containing a special offer to people who volunteer for this focus group, and then “save it for” this newbie group whom you’ve identified via the del.icio.us tag search strategy we’ve outlined here.

One hundred and ninety-four people have [saved this article](#) about “Which lenses for my Digital SLR?” Given the “tutorial” tone of the article, it’s safe to assume that these 90 people are likely getting **serious about photography** but may still be **fairly new** to the burgeoning dSLR field. You could cross-reference these 90 users against the 115 users who saved the “Top 10 cameras on Flickr” link mentioned above and **voila:** you’ve identified exactly the types of people who may be happy to serve in a focus group about your client’s new dSLR camera – especially if you offer them a big coupon for your branded goods, or maybe consider gifting them with a Flickr Pro account. In return you’d get terrific feedback from savvy online consumers about your product and brand... and possibly the beginnings of a buzz campaign about your upcoming product launch.

When you’re living on the edge, the possibilities are endless.
Reaching the Spectators

Marketing to the digital natives is “easy” in that you know where they are: they dig Web 2.0 tools like Twitter, Facebook and del.icio.us. It is “hard” in that these online enthusiasts can be quite prickly about how they like to be approached. But reaching the “spectators” using Social Media is twice as hard: you not only have to find them in more diverse niches, but you also need to think carefully about what types of content might sway their purchasing triggers.

Back in April 2007, Charlene Li (then of Forrester Research) published a paper on “Social Technographics.” In the paper, Forrester defined consumers by their levels of participation in Social Media channels. The rungs of this stepladder-of-participation ranged from “Creators” (e.g., bloggers, video uploaders, etc.) to “Inactives” (this somnambulant sector represented over 50% of Internet users).

One step up from the Inactives were the “Spectators.”

According to Forrester, and as described above, Spectators may read blogs, watch YouTube videos, etc., but they don’t go so far as to join social networking sites. They seem to be indiscriminate consumers, in the sense that they recognize some value from peer-generated content but likely don’t actively seek it out.

A good deal of modern marketers tend to target Creators, in the hopes that their advocacy will reach the true audience, the Spectators. Creators are viewed as the influencers of the Spectators. That’s often true.

But ...

How do you reach the Spectators when there are no relevant or interested Creators to reach out to, i.e., in a “neglected” market?
For example: The Baby Boomers are now reaching retirement age. That means that the WWII generation is now entering its twilight. And that means that plenty of Boomers are going to be caring for their own children as well as their elderly parents, with increasing frequency. According to the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, between 2007 and 2015 the number of Americans aged 85 and older is expected to increase by 40 percent... and by 2020, 12 million older Americans will need long-term health care.

The people most affected by these trends are already desperate for solace and counsel, and their numbers will only grow. But, most are Spectators. Where can they go? The thriving community at a site like Eons is tiny compared to the larger need; besides, as noted, Spectators don’t even join social networks.

While there are some good resources available online, virtually all are currently static, “1.0” sites that will only be found via a typical Google search. Even where message boards are available, they tend to be scattershot, redundant, and/or the “authority” of the moderators is questionable.

Meanwhile, the blogosphere appears to be very quiet on these issues. (Why? Cuz the folks facing these challenges are Spectators! They are looking for content, not creating it.)

There is a major opportunity for a large healthcare provider, insurance agency, or nursing home syndicate to create compelling, interactive, ongoing content that addresses this need. Imagine the thought leadership potential for a brand that gets this right, just as the challenge is bearing down on an entire generation?

That doesn’t mean “create a new social network.” Yet again: the Spectators don’t join social networks!

So how do you reach the Spectators?
• Find out where the Spectators are getting their information (and solace) today.
• Evaluate the quality of available content, resources, and interactivity. Can you do better?
• Conduct an SEO Analysis – what keywords are being used most often? Where do those links lead? What kinds of questions are being asked, and how do you assess the quality of the answers (via Google and in those few relevant landing sites)?
• Start developing superior content and place it where Spectators are already congregating (singly and in groups).
  o For example: how about a YouTube page filled with 90-second “helpful tips” videos, on issues such as, “talking to your kids about ‘why Grandma is moving in,’” and, “How to convince your elderly parent that it’s time to hand over the car keys.”
  ▪ YouTube is a Google property and ranks high in the algorithms, so a Spectator’s desperate search for answers on “Assisted Living,” “Home Healthcare,” etc., could quickly lead them to a branded YouTube channel.
• Further syndicate the content by offering it to the online versions of mainstream media sites (in this case, AARP.com, etc.); to any bloggers who do start tackling the eldercare issues; and via Social Media Releases.
• Start a blog that showcases these content assets. Become the advocate, the expert. Provide the best-of-the-web (pictures, advice, stories, links) so that the Spectators who find the blog know that they need look no further for both content and a relevant, supportive community.

I’ve dreamed up a pretty specific example here, but I think the principles are sound in any niche where you need to influence the Spectators.
FINDABILITY

OK, this was all a lot to digest. But wait, there’s one more thing to discuss. It’s arguably the most important thing to consider. It’s FINDABILITY. Really, it’s all about “The GOOGLE.”

Google loves fresh content. Thus, Google loves Social Media – which serves up gigabytes of fresh content every hour. All of the spadework discussed in this e-book has the happy side benefit of boosting your company’s Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

And one of the final, best ways to aid SEO is still the good ol’ press release.

Search Engine Optimized press releases have become valuable to today’s businesses. Press releases optimized with keywords and hyperlinks have been proven to increase traffic to websites, improve search engine rankings and secure greater coverage in the media.

When developing SEO-friendly press releases for your business, ask yourself the following questions:

1. How does this announcement dovetail with my organization’s current SEO initiatives?
2. What are my company’s top five keywords/phrases, and are they applicable to this specific announcement?
3. Are there any additional or different keywords appropriate for this specific release?
4. Are there specific pages on my website that I want to drive traffic to with this press release?
5. Can this announcement be enhanced by rich media content such as videos, photos, podcasts, etc.?

Once you have your SEO priorities in order, consider the following tactics to make your press release as search engine friendly as possible.
1. Determine the best keywords for your announcement. Depending on the news you are issuing, they may vary from previously identified terms.

2. Online keyword tools are excellent resources for determining the correct terms. If your organization does not subscribe to a paid keyword service, consider these free alternatives:
   - www.adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal
   - www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
   - www.blogpulse.com/trend (to determine words most often used on blogs)

3. Once keywords are determined, you may need to associate more colloquial words with them, as company/marketing jargon isn't typically used in search.

4. Use the most popular keyword phrase in the headline, which carries the most weight with search engines, as well as in the body of the release and in hyperlinks.

5. Pick one to three relevant keywords and repeat them at least three times in the release.

6. Don’t OVER-HYPERLINK words. Optimizing releases for words that are not used often in the press release can cause irrelevant results and be considered spam by some search engines.

7. Include anchor text hyperlinks in the press release that are your keywords or similar to them. Make sure you link these words back to the appropriate page on your website. For example, if you are linking a product name, link back to the product page on your site.

8. Make sure the page you are linking back to is optimized for your chosen keywords. If the anchor text is “accounting software,” be sure that it is linked to a page containing “accounting software” in the title tag and within the text on the page.

9. Place your anchor text links in the first two paragraphs. Search Engines will pick up these words more efficiently if they are placed before the “fold” of the screen.

10. Keep press releases short and concise. Most experts agree that the “sweet spot” for an SEO friendly press release is between 300 – 500 words.

11. Ensure there is a balanced keyword to press release word length ratio. Avoid too many keywords and hyperlinks in shorter releases, and vice versa in longer releases.

12. Include rich media content such as images and videos that will augment search engine pick up in places such as Google Images or Google Video. Be sure all media-rich content is appropriately tagged with keywords.
13. Include a link (not a hyperlink) to your website. Make sure to include the http:// of the URL.
14. If the release has a subhead, make sure it includes a keyword phrase. Search engines give more weight to bolded text (i.e. headline, subhead).
15. Optimize your boilerplate – always include links and keywords.
16. Resist the tendency to shorten terms. For example, if you are writing about your company’s branded data management software product, you’ll be inclined to make the second mention “the solution” or “the software.” However, people looking in search engines will type in “data management software.” Repeating “data management software” as a keyword phrase will help your release be found, while “the solution” will not. (But, try to keep the writing as “natural” as possible.)
17. If your company or product falls into a particular industry that is often referred to by an acronym, include both the full term and abbreviation throughout the release. For example, “Customer Relationship Management” should be referenced by its “full name,” and, “CRM.”

“Whatever you do – or don’t do – is now transparent and public.”

18. Post all releases on their own permalinked page on your website in addition to sending it out over wire services.
19. Be consistent with keyword use both in press releases and on your website. The website should have a keyword density of between 2-8%. This tool, www.keyworddensity.com, allows you to enter your URL and chosen keyword for a complete keyword density analysis.
20. Buy AdWords for those keywords that are very difficult to get in the first page of results (i.e. those that are more generic and colloquial, or common industry terms). Putting this extra cash to drive traffic to a press release could be vital to helping the impressions of the release, increasing visibility and the possibility of greater pickup.
Conclusions

We’ve walked through a lot in this e-book. Let’s recap the highlights.

#1 – Participation is Marketing. Become a part of the dialogue surrounding your brand and industry. People are talking about that stuff anyway: your diplomatic, helpful and responsive participation will be noticed and appreciated. And not only by today’s customers and prospects, but by the future customers and prospects who may stumble upon your current online interactions during tomorrow’s Google search.

Whatever you do – or don’t do – is now transparent and public. You can’t control this paradigm shift. Join the conversation, in a respectful and humble way. Keep “karma” in mind. It sounds “New Agey” but it boils down to this: “no one likes an a-hole.” Yea, that sums it up pretty nicely.

#2 – Honestly, you might want to think less about “marketing” and more about “findability.” If you believe that participation = marketing, and act accordingly, then isn’t it also true that you can now worry less about traditional outbound techniques and messages, and worry instead about ensuring that your high-quality online interactions and content are easily found via Google?

#3 – I’m not telling you to stop buying advertisements, billboards, radio spots, etc. Those old-fashioned tools still have a place in the marketing mix. But Forrester’s most recent updates to their Technographics research suggest that the online opportunity is only getting bigger:

“Where is the growth in consumption of online content coming from? From older people ... Social activity is way up among 35-to-44 year-olds, especially when it comes to joining social networks and reading and reacting to content. Even among 45-to-54 year-olds, 68% are now Spectators, 24% are Joiners, and only 28% are Inactives.

“Here’s what it means. It will soon be no more remarkable that your grandmother reads a blog than that she reads email. Social content is going mainstream. Social content ranks high on search engines because it changes so frequently and gets
linked to more often, so more and more online adults are becoming exposed to it, accepting it, and embracing it. If you’re a marketer, no matter what group of consumers you’re targeting, this means you must pay attention to the social world online.”

If you think back to some of the down-and-dirty ideas discussed in this e-book, you’ll realize that these concepts of participation and findability are inextricably linked to the tactics. For example, by reaching out directly to social bookmark users, you are participating in a community and ensuring that your content becomes more findable – through your direct action with users, as well as by ensuring that more people save and share your content (with the affiliated tags that benefit your brand and your SEO). Subtle but important stuff, eh?

What a great time to be a marketer!

I hope the content in this e-book helped you out. I’d love to hear your feedback! If you’ve got questions or comments, drop me a line at tdefren@shiftcomm.com. And be sure to subscribe to my blog, www.pr-squared.com for more insights, ideas and ramblings. Last but not least, if you’re a marketer who could use our agency’s help, hop on over to www.shiftcomm.com.

Now, talk amongst yourselves!

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