

Buzz Building: 7 Steps to Social Media Marketing Success



Engagement Marketing Solutions



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How cool would it be to overhear customers talking to each other and saying great things about your company? Or how important is it to know when disgruntled customers are telling others about a poor experience? If you're monitoring social media, you're gathering that information.

Customers and prospects are increasingly turning to social communities, networks and blogs for opinions about various brands, businesses and services. In 2009, the average time spent on social sites increased 82 percent globally compared to 2008¹, and the number of Twitter users spiked more than 500 percent, reaching 75 million by the end of 2009². Because recommendations from personal acquaintances or opinions posted online are trusted most³, monitoring and managing social media is a key focus among marketers.

As with email marketing, measuring your performance in social is key to success, enabling you to identify brand ambassadors, monitor the impact of promotions and adjust future campaigns based on previous results, among numerous other benefits. Here are seven steps that provide a primer for social media success.

1 Determine Your Strategy and Goals

With the increased attention on social media, some companies have jumped into the fray with little thought to how the medium will mesh with their overall strategy. Some marketers make the mistake of assuming, for example, that just because their competition has 50,000 followers on Twitter, their goal should be to have 100,000 followers. But when you're building your marketing strategy, you shouldn't start with tactical metrics.

Instead, begin by considering how to align social media goals and strategy with your core business and marketing objectives. Will you use social media as a retention tool or an acquisition tool? Will it be a channel for sales, communication, customer support, promotions or thought capital? Comcast, for example, has successfully used Twitter to address customer service issues through its Comcast Cares initiative.

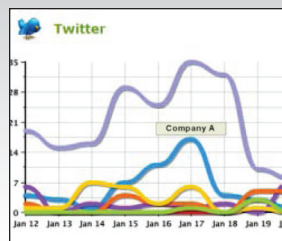
Once you've gotten a feel for how social ties in to the big picture, you can work backwards to decide, for example, if the primary focus of your Facebook page should be engaging with people via a Facebook app, growing the fan base and driving them to your Web site, or getting users to opt in to your email program.

How to Do It Right

- **Start small.** Understand what's doable within the resource constraints and corporate culture that may exist. Set modest goals at the beginning, learn from mistakes and expand from there.
- **Recognize that social is about a two-way dialogue.** Avoid ad-speak. Rather, communicate like a human being—preferably one

who has something interesting to say and who wants to hear what others think as well.

- **Get the right people involved.** Since social media is such a new and developing medium, many companies are unsure who should own it. Instead of trying to force it upon skeptical personnel, find internal enthusiasts and have them get the ball rolling.



Measure It!

New analytics tools enable you to easily monitor your efforts in social media, blogging and organic search, providing hard data with which to gauge your efforts and compare your standing versus competitors.

2 Understand Your Market

Which social networks do your customers or prospects frequent, and how do they interact once they're there? Ultimately, the key to marketing success on social media is the ability to target communities of customers and prospects that align best with your content and value proposition. Understanding customer social behavior allows you to allocate valuable resources wisely. For instance, your prospects may frequent LinkedIn for career networking, but engaging them in a B2B community site may be more appropriate for educational messages about your product. Or perhaps you have a young music-centric customer base that's active on MySpace, making it a worthy site to focus on.

How to Do It Right

- **Ask.** Go right to the source to find out customer preferences. Use surveys to get this info or capture it through a preference center. You can also tap into customer communities to understand where they're residing.

Getting Management Buy-in and Support

In some cases, the C-suite just doesn't understand the role and value of participating in social forums. Perhaps management fears the lack of control it has over negative user comments, thinking if they just ignore those pesky Tweets about their lackluster customer service, they'll go away.

To sell management on the importance of social media, start with the positives: Businesses that blog get 55 percent more Web-site visitors and 97 percent more inbound links than businesses that don't⁴, for instance. On the opposite side of the spectrum, offer examples of companies that failed to respond to negative social buzz in a timely fashion—with disastrous results. For example, United Airlines first brushed off the complaints of country singer Dave Carroll regarding its handling of his guitar, then

was slow to respond to his “United Breaks Guitars” music video—which has now been viewed 8 million times on YouTube—and the subsequent social media buzz surrounding it.

Have a plan that lays out to management exactly how you're going to use social, moving beyond hype to put the channel into a strategic framework that makes it clear that it needs to be taken as seriously as more traditional channels such as direct mail and email. Familiarize management with the new measurement tools that make it easier than ever to analyze and report on social media efforts. As with all online marketing efforts, having hard metrics to monitor performance and create accountability can make management more comfortable with new initiatives.

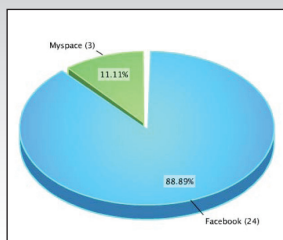
- **Use third-party research.** Check out studies and data from organizations like Forrester Research and Rapleaf to help identify where and how your customers use social media.
- **Monitor more than the big boys.** You may be surprised to discover smaller communities and blogs are popular among key influencers or those that are really engaged.

channels to bring subscribers to other channels, such as capturing email addresses via Facebook, spreading the word about your Twitter page in a blog entry and Tweeting about an exclusive SMS promotion.

By reaching out across a variety of touch points, you achieve maximum impact. Your customers and prospects are moving in and out of different social channels throughout the course of their day, so by taking an integrated multichannel approach, you significantly increase the chance of getting your message in front of them. Remember to maintain uniform messaging throughout these mediums—spread your message wide, but keep it focused.

How to Do It Right:

- **Align resources to deliver against both “campaigns” and ongoing dialogue.** Some of your social media efforts will focus on specific campaigns with concrete start and end points. Other efforts will be more timeless as you foster a continuous dialogue with the marketplace. Plan for both and align to the appropriate channels.
- **Encourage sharing your content on social networks.** Make it easy for customers and prospects to share your content, whether it's posted on your Web site, in a blog or as part of an email. Studies have shown that including social sharing links in emails, for example, will increase the reach of your message by an average of 24 percent⁵.



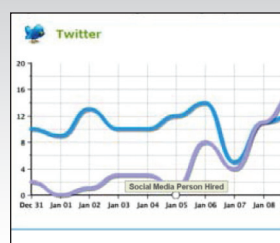
Measure It!

Monitor the share rates of content in your emails. This will give you valuable information about which social networks are most engaging to your customers. Social sites that get smaller amounts of traffic may actually yield a higher percentage of share link clicks among your subscriber base.

3 Align Execution with Key Channels

Finding the right marketing mix so you communicate with customers and prospects on their terms is essential in today's marketplace. That's why it's important to understand that social media is not about replacing other marketing channels—it's about integrating with them. To be successful, you have to go beyond debates such as “Twitter or Facebook?” and think holistically, considering the entire lifecycle of a prospect or customer. That means envisioning and understanding the dialogue your company is having with these people and how social can increase their level of engagement.

Savvy marketers integrate marketing messages across both social and traditional channels. Involve customers and prospects in the process by inviting them to select channel preferences. Leverage each of your



Measure It!

Monitor how your channels impact one another. Compare the dates of key marketing campaigns to the number of Tweets and blog mentions that resulted, looking for spikes in mentions and monitoring whether response was positive or negative.

Differences Between B2B and B2C

Though there's a strong overlap between B2C and B2B social media efforts, there are a few important areas where they diverge. Here's a look at some key differentiators:

	B2C	B2B
Sample Channels	Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Yelp	Blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter, SlideShare
How Customers and Prospects Use the Channels	Entertainment, sharing, learning, researching products, coupons/promotions, reviews/complaints	Research, best practices, customer support
Marketing and Business Goals	Creating awareness/buzz, engaging with customers and increasing fandom, resolving complaints, driving revenue through promotions	Awareness/buzz, position company as thought/market leader, promote thought leadership efforts such as Webinars, blogs, studies/research, events, etc.
What One Can Learn from the Other	Providing helpful information to consumers is more engaging than standard promotional campaigns, but can also make promotional content more attractive and timely	Social networks are a good forum to push the envelope with more adventurous promotions, advertising and better leveraging the groundswell

4 Create Content That Connects

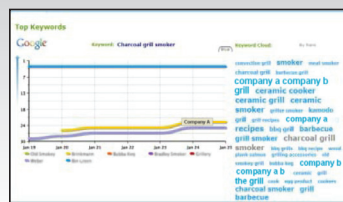
The foundation of effective marketing remains the same: content is king. For example, a company with 50,000 social media followers disseminating highly relevant, engaging content that users feel motivated to share can be more effective than a competitor with content that is not deemed valuable and is rarely shared by its fan base of 100,000.

To leverage your content for maximum impact, first decide what voice and style your communications will have. Then create content that lends itself to shareworthiness, comments and conversation-starting. Tweak it for specific channels, keeping a similar message but varying the language and tone a bit—e.g., a newsletter article or blog post might be fairly straightforward while a related Twitter post might incorporate some humor or call out a related post by an industry blogger.

You'll also want to optimize the social media content you create for search engines. With Tweets popping up in Google search results and the SEO-friendly nature of blogging, social media can be a powerful tool for improving your search engine rankings for strategic keywords (particularly long-tail ones), upping the number of inbound links to your Web site and increasing overall site traffic.

How to Do It Right:

- **Loss the corporate speak.** While some may say that consumers don't want companies as "friends," people do expect companies to speak as humans, to be transparent and lose the "PR" speak. Social media is about authenticity and believability. With its built-in check and balances, participants will out you if you stray from the social norms.
- **Deliver content that educates, not just sells.** Taking a consistent educational and engaging approach with your content allows companies to drop promotional content into the flow (depending on the context) and have these messages be accepted.
- **Be consistent.** Having a regular cadence to your social media efforts, whether posting blogs or Tweeting, will pay dividends. Though it's tough to predict social media success, you have to put yourself in position to take advantage of opportunities that arise. And with nearly half of corporate Twitter accounts updating at least once a day⁶, chances are that if you aren't active on social media sites, your competitors will be. Having a consistent cadence also greatly increases your following.



Measure It!

Is the content you've worked so hard to create optimized for search? Monitor keyword trends and Internet traffic compared to competitors to see where there's room for improvement. Then, tweak your existing text and future postings accordingly.

5 Engage the Marketplace

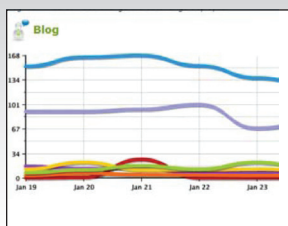
Every marketer dreams of seeing his or her carefully crafted messages go viral, increasing reach exponentially. But success doesn't happen overnight. To get started, you have to build a base by seeding social networks and communities with content that educates, informs and starts dialogue. And then, you've got to get people to take the content you're seeding and spread it wide. The key? Listening and responding.

Monitor key communities, competitors, influencers and related industry topics and keywords on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks. This will increase your understanding of what people are talking about, better enable you to join conversations where they already exist, and can prompt new ideas that shape your future content. The more you interact with users, the better your content will engage customers and prospects, and the stronger the chances your messages will go viral.

How to Do It Right:

- **Seed the conversation.** Post content in a style that generates reaction and conversation around a topic that is consistent with your company's offerings, but isn't directly self-promotional. This helps position your company as an authority, and often the conversation will lead to consumers discussing your offerings for you.

- **Make it fun.** Remember that for the majority of users, social media is about being social. Yes, it can be overwhelming, frustrating, embarrassing and time-consuming—but it usually isn't boring. Company employees involved in your social media efforts need to love it as much as users. A lack of enthusiasm and sincerity will be apparent and can hurt your efforts.



Measure It!

Monitor how many mentions your company and products are getting in the blogosphere and on social sites compared to your competitors—and whether the buzz is positive or negative.

6 Identify and Enable Influencers and Fans

Social media is generally at its best when it's customer to customer, not company to customer. Harnessing the real power of the medium means having your customers, fans and influencers do as much of the promotion as possible. For example, let's say someone Tweets a question about your product and asks others to weigh in. Instead of responding, you could reach out to one of your brand enthusiasts and say, "I'm not sure if you've seen this conversation on Twitter. Would you mind taking a minute to hop in and give your thoughts?"

To be in a position to do so, you'll first need to identify potential brand ambassadors by tracking some key data. Find out who's already sharing your offers to their social networks, and monitor buzz in the blogosphere, on Twitter, etc. to find key influencers in your industry. Landing these types of endorsements can have a substantial impact—one industry study showed that 90 percent of consumers trust recommendations from people they know.³

How to Do It Right:

- **Build goodwill among brand ambassadors.** These persuaders can have a huge impact, so treat them well by directly and regularly engaging with them and providing them with special benefits. Make them feel important. You'll cultivate increased loyalty and give them further incentive to share even more.
- **Reach out to influencers in addition to fans.** On both the B2C and B2B side, there are people who may not be high-value customers but still may be fans or influence others about purchasing decisions—fanatics, industry analysts, Mommy bloggers, reporters, etc. For example, people that grew up in Chicago may be huge fans of a specific pizza restaurant, even though they have relocated to California and only get to visit once a year, making it smart for that pizzeria to reach out to them. Engaging these people and joining their

conversations where appropriate can strengthen your position in the marketplace.

- **Respond to negative criticism on a case-by-case basis.** Some negative posts require an immediate public response, while others are better handled with additional time and in private. For example, if someone with 50 followers Tweets negatively about your company, responding publicly to your thousands of followers may bring unnecessary attention to the issue. When possible, resolve the problem directly with the complainer. In many situations, the person affected will come back and publicly thank the company for taking care of the issue.



Measure It!

Track who's talking the most about your company, your competitors and the industry in general—and reach out to them. These people could become influential brand ambassadors.

7 Monitor Social Activity

As with measuring email metrics, monitoring social activity can help you quantify the performance of your initiatives, improve your understanding of customers and prospects, and tighten up the efficiency of your programs. Only instead of measuring opens, click-throughs and bounces, you'll be monitoring volume, cadence, viral share rate, the sentiment of buzz ... and who's buzzing.

In addition, monitoring the blogosphere and social forums enables you to analyze promotions, communications, etc. in a new way. For example, imagine you send out an email with a link to a white paper. Previously, you may have measured success by whether recipients opened your email, clicked-through and downloaded your white paper. Measuring social media enables you to also gauge your success by whether customers and prospects are sharing your white paper and talking about it. These deeper insights will subsequently allow you to engage customers and prospects more strongly by tailoring future content accordingly.

How to Do It Right:

- **Measure a wide range of data.** To unleash the full potential of your analytics, you should monitor both process metrics (e.g. the number of followers/fans, message reach, social sharing rate, total mentions, etc.) and output metrics (e.g. revenue, leads generated, brand lift, etc.).
- **Learn from the results.** Use the data you've measured to adjust and optimize future initiatives. For example, if you discover that a new product campaign resulted in a strong uptick in Tweets and blogs, you might design a special Twitter-only campaign offering a channel-exclusive discount, or seed a special promotion on key blogs offering a product discount.

- **Evaluate progress at regular intervals.** Every quarter, ask yourself a series of key questions regarding your social media efforts: Where have we made mistakes, and what's worked? How do we take this to the next level? Are we using the right channels? Do we need more resources, and do we have people focused on the right channels? Use the data you've measured to help provide answers.



Measure It!

Always tie social activity back to your strategic goals. That means monitoring impact and ROI by keeping tabs on sales, brand awareness, leads, reduced calls to call centers and cost reduction in addition to the number of followers you're racking up.

Conclusion

In today's marketplace gone social, retaining existing customers becomes the key to acquiring new ones. Delivering educational content so customers see you as providing value beyond the product is a savvy way to accomplish higher retention rates—and will likely result in enticing new customers into the fold as well. Social media, with its myriad product reviews, commentary and people seeking information and advice, is a fantastic vehicle for delivering this content.

It's also the perfect platform for enabling customers to do the marketing for you. You send out an email or post a blog or Tweet, and it quickly gets shared on various networks, greatly increasing its reach. Using social media measurement tools, you can then track the impact of your inbound and outbound marketing efforts and see how they play off one another, improving your grasp of how the various elements of your multichannel marketing efforts are interacting and tying back to your overall business goals. And monitoring social activity can also give you a competitive

advantage by helping you hone content, identify brand ambassadors and key influencers, and more effectively enter online conversations. The result will be stronger engagement with customers and prospects, leading to better sales, higher retention rates and increased ROI.

Resources

1. Read the study "Emails Gone Viral: Measuring 'Share to Social' Performance" for insights on deploying share-to-social functionality so you can maximize the opportunity of this emerging viral technique.
2. Download the recorded Webinar "Email Marketing Goes Social: What It Takes to Make Email Sharing Work" for insights on how to leverage your existing email marketing efforts to tap into social marketing. Listed with the Webinar description are links to more resources on the Silverpop Web site.
3. Read more about the impact of social media and *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies* by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff at Forrester's "Groundswell" blog.
4. Follow the latest social-media developments on the blog "Mashable."
5. Read insights into the integration of email and social marketing by Loren McDonald, Silverpop's vice president for industry relations, in MediaPost's Email Insider column every other Thursday.
6. Stay up to date with news, trends and events in social sharing, email marketing and lead generation and share your comments on digital marketing topics on Silverpop's Engagement Marketing and Demand Generation blogs.

Footnotes:

- 1-Nielsen, "Led by Facebook, Twitter, Global Time Spent on Social Media Sites up 82% Year over Year," Jan. 2010
- 2-RJ Metrics, "New Data on Twitter's Users and Engagement," Jan. 2010
- 3-Nielsen, "Global Advertising: Consumers Trust Real Friends and Virtual Strangers the Most," July 2009
- 4-Hubspot, "Study Shows Small Businesses That Blog Get 55% More Website Visitors," Aug. 2009
- 5-Silverpop, "Emails Gone Viral: Measuring 'Share to Social' Performance," 2009
- 6-MarketingProfs, "The State of Social Media Marketing," 2009

To find out more about Silverpop's Engage solution and how it can benefit your company, please contact us toll-free at 1-866-SILVPOP (745-8767) or email us at info@silverpop.com.

Visit us at www.silverpop.com



SILVERPOP INBOUND (BETA)

Making it easy for marketers to measure and improve their efforts in social media, blogging and organic search

When someone in your target market goes looking for information about your offerings, you want to make sure they find YOU, not someone else. That's why savvy marketers are paying more attention to social media and SEO. And now, with Silverpop Inbound, you can easily identify big picture trends as well as dig deep and interact with relevant individual social posts and conversations so you can reap the benefits of these exciting inbound channels.

Thinking Beyond the Inbox

Traditionally, outbound marketing efforts have focused on “getting the word out” about your company and its products and services. In many cases, these efforts work toward educating consumers about the existence and potential benefits of your offering, as well as convincing them that your company or product is the right choice to meet their needs.

When they're ready to act on their needs, many consumers in today's market go online to search for information. This is when your inbound marketing efforts can complement your outbound initiatives—but only if you've positioned your company for maximum visibility in search engines and across the social media landscape.

So, how does your brand's online presence stack up against the competition? Silverpop Inbound can help you answer that question by monitoring the following areas:

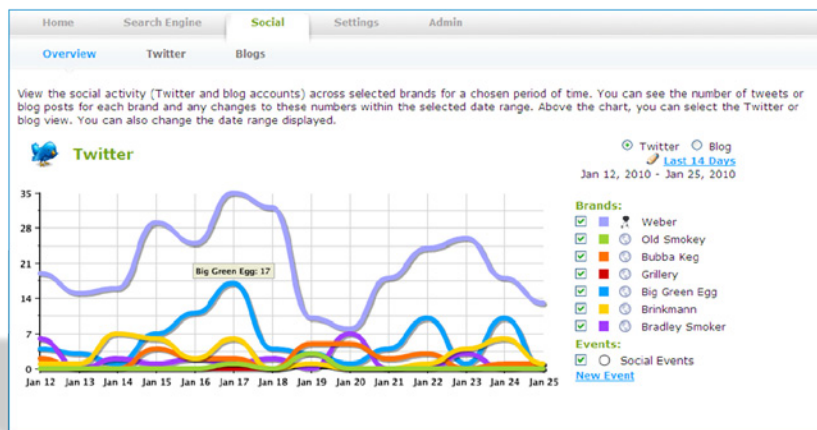
Social Media—We've known for a long time that a personal recommendation is the best endorsement you can hope for in terms of building trust in your brand. With the rising popularity of social media and especially Twitter, consumers turn first to other real people to see what they have to say about products and services they are considering. These conversations are going on whether you participate or not, so savvy marketers are listening and joining in.

Silverpop's tools make it easy for you to see how much buzz your brand is getting on Twitter. We also bring you the essential measurements that marketers

say they care about: Who are the top tweeters for my brand (and my competitors)? How influential are the people who are Tweeting about us? How is our buzz trending over time? When we initiate a new marketing campaign or social effort, are we seeing the corresponding uptick in social media buzz that we would hope for?

Organic Search—It's no surprise that search engines are the starting point for most journeys on the Internet. If you're not paying attention to how your site ranks for the search terms that are relevant to your business, you're missing out on traffic, and that means missing out on potential customers. Worse yet, these are people who have clearly demonstrated an interest in offerings such as yours.

Silverpop's SEO capabilities make it simple to find out how your company ranks relative to your competitors for the keywords that matter to your business and industry. Once you know where you want to focus, a few simple changes can help you boost your organic search engine rankings. Higher rankings mean more traffic to your site, and more traffic to your site means more potential revenue.



Over time, you can monitor which keywords are bringing the most visitors. You can then focus your on-site optimization to make sure you rank as high as possible when prospects are out searching for someone to meet their needs.

Blogging—“Content is King.” This age-old idiom is still true, and increasingly companies are turning to blogging as a great way to put more quality content into the world. Blogging not only gives companies a relatively quick, easy vehicle to deliver content, but unlike other outbound marketing efforts, once a blog post is written it can pay dividends forever.

Our blog monitoring features can help you track how often your brand is getting mentioned by influential people in the blogosphere. It's easy to see how many times your company is getting mentioned in a given time period, and it's just as easy to drill down and view and comment on specific blog posts whenever you want. Tracking your progress over time can be a

great motivator to help improve and evolve your blogging efforts to make sure you're creating the kind of buzz that will help your company get found.

Traffic—Quantcast and Alexa keep track of how popular your site is relative to everything else on the Internet, and Silverpop Inbound gives you quick and easy access to track your progress (and keep tabs on your competitors) with these ranking sites over time. Traffic rankings are one more indicator of how effective all your marketing efforts are at driving the right traffic to your site.

Silverpop has always been focused on enabling clients to be more effective marketers, and our inbound capabilities help achieve that goal by giving savvy marketers just the right amount of information—enough to be actionable, but not so much that it feels like you're drowning in data. When you add these capabilities to your arsenal, you'll gain a more holistic view of your efforts that will enable you to take your marketing to higher levels.

To find out more about Silverpop's Engage solution and how it can benefit your company, please contact us toll-free at 1-866-SILVPOP (745-8767) or email us at info@silverpop.com.

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