Networking to Win

How to Use the Power of Social Media to Sign New Clients and Build New Business

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Foreword

*Networking to Win* is a must-read for everyone.

If you are sitting on the sidelines, watching the social media explosion and wondering what to do, you need to read this book right now.

If you are a marketing professional of any kind, you need to read this book right now. If you are a business executive or owner (big or small), you need to read this book right now.

If you are a social media professional with bottom-line responsibility, you definitely need to read this book right now.

Steve Bookbinder will give you the insight and the understanding of the core elements of social media that will help you interact with your teams, vendors, and peers about the question of the day: How will social media marketing help me grow my business?

Unless you have been hiding in a cave the past few years, you already know that social media has become deeply ingrained in our society. Not only
are consumers connecting with each other, but *Fortune* 1000 businesses and major national and international brands are also staking their claims. If you have not yet taken action and set up a strategy for how you will market in this space, rest assured that your competitors are doing so.

Read Steve’s book. Read it now. Make sure everyone in your organization reads it.

Being social, of course, is not a new thing. It is deeply ingrained in our human nature. The desire to interact and connect with others, either to share information, to gain insight, or to boost our own egos, is something we have been doing since the dawn of our time on this planet. It is something that Abraham Maslow noted as vital to the success of the human species, and now it is something that new technology is helping us do a whole lot more of, better and faster than ever before.

In the world of social media, if you want to be recognized, if you want to have influence, if you want to be seen and noticed, there is one thing you absolutely have to do: *be an active and relevant participant*. This means frequent and rich content creation, distribution, and promotion in and around the social ecosystem. This is what makes you break
through. It takes commitment of time, resources, and brainpower. But it is worth it.

For marketers, I believe social media is the best brand and business building medium out there, period. It is better than TV, it is better than print, it is better than anything else in digital. I am not saying that you should abandon all the other mediums. I just believe that social media in all its forms is and will continue to be a powerful draw to humans and is the single best way to build your business and your brand. Social media brings together the rich storytelling brand experiences that TV used to provide, coupled with the fantastic benefits and power of word of mouth.

Instead of selling promotions and discounts, we can now sell attributes and benefits of our services—and better yet, we can get our customers and advocates to share those experiences with our potential customers! This is marketing as it should be!

Read Steve’s book. Then go out and experience for yourself what social media can do for your business.

Joe Doran

Founder/CEO, Tout Inc.
Introduction

Marketing on the Social Web

Social media represent one of the most accessible and potentially valuable marketing opportunities in history. Companies of all sizes and individuals from virtually every walk of life are using social media to promote brands and products, to interact with customers, to generate sales leads, and to increase their revenue through new business. They’re using these web-based, user-centric media to win sales, build and manage their reputations, correct misinformation, and tell their stories. And if they’re smart, they’re using them to listen to what the rest of the world is saying about them.

Promoting your company, your products, or yourself effectively through social media isn’t exactly rocket science, but it does take a little practice. In fact, effective social media marketing requires a fairly significant conceptual shift from traditional
marketing approaches. In the social media world, success isn’t about the pitch but the conversation. You will see that theme coming up again and again in this book.

Successful sales and marketing in the social media sphere is all about connecting with the influencers—the bloggers and Twitterers and Facebook users whose opinions and recommendations carry weight on the social web. It’s also about establishing your own influence, reputation, and brand within targeted communities of potential customers, fans, and/or supporters.

*Networking to Win: How to Use the Power of Social Media to Sign New Clients and Build New Business* will help you get that conversation started and keep it going. It’ll point you to the tools you’ll need and suggest the practices you’ll want to embrace to build your business through social media.

You don’t have to be a social media expert to put these concepts and strategies to work. And you don’t need a big budget, or any budget, to get started.

This book assumes that you have some minimal familiarity with social media—that you’ve at least wandered about Facebook, LinkedIn, or
Twitter—and that you’ve see the potential of these platforms and want to learn how to make the most of them.

*Networking to Win* aims to provide readers with effective social media strategies that really deliver but that don’t require unreasonable amounts of time. If you have been dipping your toe into the social media waters (make that ocean), you know what a time vampire it can be. One minute you’re catching up on your Twitter followers, and before you know it, you’ve spent two hours tweeting and retweeting and you’re not sure where the time went. Or you think you’re done with your workday, but you realize that you need to update your Facebook status and suddenly the whole thing feels like a second job.

The strategies, tactics, tips, and suggestions in this book are designed to help you put together a social media marketing plan that works for you and that helps you to achieve your business goals without sucking up too much of your time or driving you crazy. Using the tactics you’ll learn here, you’ll be able to start slowly (highly recommended) and build from there. Although *Networking to Win* touches on a wide range of social media, it focuses closely on
three platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. This is to help you prioritize and save you time. There are hundreds of social media services out there, and dozens of social networks, so it’s easy to dilute your resources and drive yourself insane trying to cover them all. These three platforms are not only the clear leaders in the United States, but they also have a global presence. They’re what you should be spending your limited time, attention, and capital on as you get started because they’re miles ahead of their nearest competitors. Building your social media marketing plan around them will give you the most bang for your buck. What’s more, these three platforms are trendsetters; the core skills you develop and basic strategies you employ working with them should set you up well to work with just about anyone else out there when you decide it’s time to expand your efforts.

Lots of people make the mistake of using social media channels to send salesy messages. This inevitably backfires. This book explores the type and style of content that is more likely to be welcomed by members of social media communities. It’s all too easy to turn these people off with purely promotional or spammy content. Zig
when you should have zagged here, and you run the risk of damaging your credibility and your brand. The guidelines you will find here will steer you toward the type of content that will actually make you a valuable member of whatever community you’re trying to market to.

*Networking to Win* also considers the potential marketing advantages of the social media two-way street. More and more organizations are discovering the value of the content created by other members of the community. This book explores the unique opportunity social media provide to interact with customers and potential customers, to hear what they really care about and what interests them.

You’ll find some essential social media marketing concepts in this book—things like *reputation* and *influence* will be defined and explored—alongside the traditional concepts of *push* and *pull* marketing. But the emphasis here is on providing concrete steps for winning sales, building brand awareness, developing and nurturing relationships, and generally leveling the playing field for small businesses.

Although the social media covered in this book are relatively young, they’ve spawned an enormous
ecosystem of third-party tools. *Networking to Win* looks at the latest generation of tools designed to help social media users manage their interactions with disparate services and track their impact. Many of these tools have proven themselves in the marketplace and already become industry standards; some are nascent offerings with not-to-be-overlooked potential. The final chapter throws a spotlight on the tools and techniques now emerging that measure the effectiveness of your social media marketing efforts.

Social media marketing is quickly evolving into a discipline and a methodology for developing a reputation and a brand, both for individuals and organizations. Do this right, and you’ll find yourself with truly unprecedented access to potential customers, employers, and like-minded people. Do it wrong, and you could alienate millions, instantly, in real time.

Keep reading, pace yourself, do a little bit each day, and you’ll stay on the right track.
Chapter 1

The Social Media Landscape

Social media is an umbrella term that covers a group of web-based software applications, the content generated by users of those applications, and the services that make both accessible to just about anyone with a web browser.

Social media differ from mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) in two important ways. First, the content is generated by users. You write the blog. You make and upload the video. You recommend the restaurant. Second, it’s interactive. People don’t just read your blog posting, your tweet, or your review; they comment on it. That interaction is, in fact, the essence of the form. And all of this can happen instantly, in real time, with no waiting for a letter to the editor to be published in the paper, no languishing on hold until you’re connected to the
radio talk show host, no waiting to hear back from the editor at a publishing company.

You could say that social media introduced something that we’ve businesses have never had before: a media delivery system that reaches a (potentially) large audience and functions in two directions. Media is now a two-way street.

**Types of Social Media**

Identifying categories of social media is a tricky business because things change so quickly. The changes you’re likely to see in the future will almost certainly involve the integration of the capabilities of different media types. For example, both Facebook and Twitter now offer location-sharing features. But for now at least, the following list should provide a useful roadmap.

**Messaging and Communication**

This category includes blogging services, video blogging tools, podcasting, and microblogging.

Blogs (short for “weblog”) are shared online journals that are written by individuals, published on the web, and available to anyone to read and
comment on. They contain the blogger’s thoughts, observations, recommendations, reflections, opinions, and feelings on whatever he or she wants to write about. And they’re displayed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent posting at the top. Blogger and WordPress are two popular blogging platforms.

A microblog is a newer species of blog. The main difference is that it’s shorter than a blog. Twitter, whose 140-word messages are now flooding the blogosphere, is the best known, and that’s the service that gets the spotlight in this book, but it’s not the only one. Tumblr, Plurk, Squeelr, Beeing, Jaiku, and Indenti.ca are other examples.

Originally, blogging consisted exclusively of text-based messages posted to the Internet. Today, a blog can offer readers a multimedia experience with photos, audio clips, and video elements. Some people even consider podcasting, which is essentially a short radio broadcast in the form of digital audio distributed over the Internet, as a type of blogging. The video blog, or “vlog,” is a blog in the form of a video file.
Communities and Social Groups

This category includes the social, business, and special-interest networking services.

The Academy Award–winning movie *The Social Network* may have helped place the term “social network” in the American lexicon, but the phrase was on its way there anyway. One big reason is the heading-for-a-billion-users success of Facebook. Finding a home untouched by this social media platform is a statistical rarity in the United States.

It’s worth examining precisely what the phrase “social network” means. A *social network* is a computer-mediated community. The web is the medium in which these communities live, and members interact through devices connected to the Internet, including desktop computers, laptops, smartphones, and tablet PCs.

The key word here is “community.” Like any community, social networks post codes of conduct that include basic courtesies that members in other civilized social environments enjoy. And because these communities are hosted on the web by a service provider, it’s a lot easier to enforce those codes. Bad actors, when they are discovered, can be
banned from the website. Along with these conventions meant to keep members from stepping on each other’s digital toes, social networks add boundaries that are unique to the online world. For example, most prohibit the posting of copyrighted material.

When you think of social networks, you may think of the big one—you know, the one that inspired the movie that showed up on many theater marquees simply as Facebook—but it’s worth remembering that there are plenty of other online social networks out there, including MySpace, BlackPlanet, and Google +, to name just a few. (Google +, in particular, is likely to claim a position of dominance within this space; as of the release date of this book, it had only recently launched.)

**The Big Three**

That’s the social media landscape as of this writing. It’s a rich environment ripe with marketing opportunities. But as you begin promoting your company, your cause, your products, or yourself through social media, you’ll be less overwhelmed if you start with a strategy that focuses on three social
media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Here’s why:

**Facebook**

Facebook is the world’s most popular social networking service. Its membership passed 650 million recently, and industry watchers are expecting membership to exceed the once-unimaginable 1 billion mark in late 2011. With numbers like that, it’s no exaggeration to say that Facebook is the most popular social media site, period. And keep in mind that half of the people in that massive user base visit the site every single day.

It’s no wonder Facebook pages generally rank high in search engine results. Nor is it surprising that Facebook is evolving into a kind of standard for social networks. In the past few years, other social media sites have begun to mirror the design of the Facebook main page.

Companies use Facebook to network with current customers and begin conversations with new ones. Facebook is now becoming the most popular online marketing platform. As of this writing, the company’s ad revenues are passing $1.2 million annually.
The web watchers at Alexa (www.alexa.com) rank Facebook number two overall in terms of online traffic in the United States. (Google comes in at number one.)

If all these numbers weren’t enough to make Facebook the go-to network for social media marketing, there’s the integration factor. Facebook is connected to a wide range of third-party websites, applications, mobile devices, and gaming systems. The Facebook Connect feature allows members to log on to these other sites and systems using their profiles and to post information from and to their Facebook accounts.

As of March 2010, fully a third of all Facebook users were fans of at least one brand, and nearly half had joined fan pages to let their friends know which brands and products they endorse.

Facebook Is Marketer Friendly

Facebook provides a wealth of tools for marketing on the site, ranging from tools for offering free samples to tools for building e-commerce sites into
Facebook pages to tools for surveying that allow companies to engage customers in company decisions on issues such as product changes, labeling, flavor offerings, and so on. You’ll learn more about Facebook’s ever-changing suite of marketing tools in Chapter 4; a summary of them is constantly updated at www.facebook.com/marketing.

**Twitter**

Twitter is the world’s most popular microblogging service. It currently claims 200 million registered members. Last spring, the service published its 10 billionth tweet. The 140-character text messages are now flowing at the rate of about 600 per second, perhaps even faster by the time you read this.

The Twitter stream is integrated into other social media services. LinkedIn, for example, posts the latest tweets of its members. Alexa’s web trendspotters rank Twitter fourth in terms of traffic to websites in the United States and ninth globally.

Twitter has become an extremely hot marketing medium. The microblogging service has attracted
some big-name advertisers, including American Express, Coca-Cola, Nissan, Hewlett-Packard, and Starbucks. Twitter is expected to triple its advertising revenue to $150 million in 2011, and industry watchers at eMarketer think that it might reach $250 million in 2012.

One Tweet Fits All

It’s not just the big companies who are twittering for dollars. Speaking at the 2009 Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) Conference, former Twitter CEO Evan Williams showed his audience photos of a block-long line of customers queuing up at LA’s popular Kogi Korean BBQ taco truck. A constant Twitter feed keeps Kogi’s customers informed about where and when it will stop next.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world’s largest business-oriented social network, with more than 60 million registered users around the world. It’s most popular in the United States (from which it draws about half its membership), but it has millions of users in Europe
and India. The site is all about professional contacts. Member profiles include job histories and recommendations from employers and colleagues. Users grow their contact lists by harvesting, with permission, from their contacts’ contact lists. (This means each member has to agree to join a new person’s list.) According to LinkedIn, its average member is a college-educated forty-three-year-old making upwards of $100,000 a year.

This is strictly a business-oriented social networking service that was created specifically for professional networking. Members build profiles that are essentially professional biographies they use to throw a spotlight on their expertise, their credentials, their accomplishments, and their brands.

LinkedIn is the network you join to find a sales lead, connect with business partners, and nurture your relationships with professional colleagues, customers, clients, and enterprise associates. One of the great strengths of the LinkedIn network is its focus on professional connections. All of its networking features are geared to that purpose.

LinkedIn users spend time on the site in order to present a professional face to the world. It gives
them a kind of control console for the professional information that is published about them.

Networking and business are all but inseparable concepts, and LinkedIn allows you to expand your professional network internationally. Business owners, account managers, salespeople, and professionals use the network to get referrals, find customers, and interact with colleagues. This is also a network where members can pick up market trends through discussions in groups of customers and/or peers.

The site is packed with features to support business networking activities and develop a personal brand.

**What about Everybody Else?**

It’s important to repeat that this book’s focus on the Big Three previously identified is *not* meant to suggest that you won’t ever use or shouldn’t learn about other social media platforms. This book is designed to get you up and running and keep you from losing your way in what can be, and all too often is, a fatally confusing maze of unprioritized marketing initiatives. If you start with these three essential sites, you can be certain you’re doing the
right thing and also, over time, gaining the experience you need to tackle other platforms.
Chapter 2

The Power of Social Media Marketing

“Social media marketing” is no longer just a hype-soaked buzz phrase. The practice of engaging with social media for marketing purposes, though still evolving, is now in the mainstream. However, before you invest too much of your organization’s time, attention, or resources in this space, it’s important to get a clear understanding of what social media marketing can and can’t do.

What Social Media Marketing Can Do

Marketing through social media can help you to:

- Develop and nurture relationships
  Social media provide a unique means of connecting directly with customers and
potential clients or partners. This is the core value proposition here. Never before in history has this kind of access been possible, and it’s invaluable. Whole Foods is an example of a company that seems to be taking full advantage of this connection. The company has more than 1.2 million followers on Twitter (at last count), and 123 million Facebook fans.

• **Build product and brand awareness**

  Quite a few companies seem to be making the social web work for branding and promotion. The makers of the movie *Avatar*, for example, established a wildly successful Facebook fan page to promote the movie and respond to fans. It reportedly drew 700,000 fans, and it was still going strong months after the movie premiered. The author Neil Gaiman twitters frequently about his adventures on book tours and readings at local book stores, and he responds to his readers through the microblog. At last count, he had nearly 1.5 million followers.
• **Increase traffic to a website**

Brooke Burke, best known as a model and cohost of the TV show *Dancing with the Stars*, is also co-CEO of an online parenting guide called ModernMom. Burke maintains an active presence on Twitter and Facebook, but it’s probably the telegenic entrepreneur’s frequent appearances on YouTube, during which she discuss health, fitness, and parenting, that drives traffic to her site. As of this writing, she has over 3,000 friends on Facebook.

• **Generate buzz about a company, product, person, or event**

In 2010, Pepsi did something that should prove at least somewhat validating for proponents of social media marketing. Instead of advertising on the Super Bowl, as the company had for many years, Pepsi went with a $20 million interactive Internet campaign that included a big Facebook promotion. It’s hard to say which got the company more attention: the campaign or the news about the campaign!
• *Expand customer entry points*
  Once you establish a social media presence, more people will be able to find you more easily. Where before they could only track you down through the Yellow Pages or a Google search, now millions of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn users can connect with you and/or your company more easily.

• *Learn what customers, fans, and supporters want*
  It could be argued that the most valuable aspect of social media for companies is their ability to provide customer feedback. You can track mentions of your brand and/or name and find out what people really want from you. You see what your customers like and respond to. And because people tend to say things on the web they would never say to your face, you get the closest thing you’re likely to find to honest feedback.

• *Spy on the competition*
  Social media is highly transparent, which means that it’s never been easier to see what the other guys are doing. While you’re
listening to the complaints and compliments of your own customers, you can listen to theirs as well.

- **Respond to criticism and correct misinformation quickly and directly**
  Years ago, the Audi brand was the unfortunate victim of an overzealous, and inaccurate, network TV report that claimed their cars were unsafe. The brand barely survived. Back then, there were few effective ways to counter the bad information beyond circulating press releases most people ignore and suing for libel, a complex and extremely expensive undertaking. Now, social media channels make setting the record straight easier, quicker, and cheaper.

- **Level the marketing playing field for small businesses and individuals**
  Social media make it possible to develop your brand without a massive budget. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn give you access to millions of people you simply wouldn’t be able to reach any other
way—people who might love your products, spread the good word about your company, and help you to advance your career. And all you need is a browser, an Internet connection, and some time.

*Find and serve niche markets*
Because social media are not limited by geography, they support the development of distributed communities of hobbyists, fans, and like-minded people. If you have a niche product or service, there’s no better way to find and connect with potential customers than social media.

Marketing through social media won’t transform your business in one fell swoop.

This is going to take time, effort, creativity, and persistence. Expecting that you will win massive new market share within two weeks of setting up your Facebook account is a mistake. Give yourself time to learn, time to make a few mistakes, and time to experiment with different tactics.
This is not to discourage you from getting started, only to give you some perspective and help you to set realistic expectations.

It’s probably worth underscoring here that even though it is not a magic wand that you can wave over any business sector to produce instant profitability, there are clear, undeniable, bottom-line advantages to mastering and using the concepts from this book. Big companies are indeed taking social media marketing very seriously. All you need to do to prove this for yourself is to watch an hour or so of prime-time television, paying close attention to the commercials. How many of the major advertisers do you now notice asking people to connect with them on Twitter or Facebook? How many major advertisers were doing that five years ago?

**Getting Your Feet Wet**

When you’re new to a site, start by signing up and spending some low-profile time there before you start posting. Get to know the rules of the community—the do’s and don’ts, which you can usually find in the site’s Help menu. Spend most of your time just getting acquainted.
While you’re listening in, keep an ear out for the influencers whose opinions seem to hold sway with the communities. These are the people you want to value and recommend you. You’ll also want to track mentions of your brand, your company, your products, and even your industry. It’s perfectly possible that you won’t find anything, but it’s a good idea to know what is being said, why, and by whom. Note that online boycotts that affect your company, brand, or products can materialize with astonishing speed in the social media space, and a single disgruntled customer can start one.

**Getting Involved, Getting Focused**

If you want to market your product, service, or company through social media, you must approach it as a user. You need to create a profile page, add status updates, share photos, recommend other websites, and just generally join the conversation. Don’t try to fake this part. To the degree that you can, you should actually become a member of the community you are targeting. The moment you are perceived as an outsider, you will lose.
In addition, you need to have someone worth talking about. That’s the tricky part. For that to happen, you need to create and circulate the right content.

If the content you create is perceived by the community as purely promotional, it won’t be welcomed, and you will turn off potential customers and/or supporters. If the community decides that the content you’re offering is spammy or just an advertisement, or worse, unreliable, your campaign will suffer or fail completely. People won’t mind seeing some promotional stuff from time to time, as long as it’s mixed in with genuinely valuable content.

So, what should you talk about? Within the context of the answers to the questions you asked yourself earlier, look for opportunities to:

- **Demonstrate expertise**
  Comment on a topic you know very well. Post tips and tricks on your Facebook page. Recommend good products. Offer free advice in your area of expertise that users will find helpful.

- **Become a real resource**
Offer access to information, people, and tools that people in your target market want but can’t track down easily. Whenever you possibly can, connect Person With Problem X to Person With The Solution to Problem X. (This is a particularly important skill to deploy on LinkedIn.)

- **Talk to people**
  If you find that people are responding to something you’ve posted, get back to them and acknowledge their response. Today! Pose a provocative followup question. Invite others to join in. Get the conversational balls rolling.

- **Create a group**
  You don’t have to be the only one adding valuable content to a social media site if you start a group. Groups can give you a leadership position and provide even richer customer feedback. They can also provide focus.
The Cost: Time and Maybe a Little Money

When they begin implementing a social media marketing initiative, many companies discover that they save some money. After all, an account on Facebook or Twitter is free. But companies also find out that making those accounts work for them actually isn’t free. What it costs is time.

You can’t just set up a social media account and walk away. These aren’t billboards. Social media accounts need tending. If you want to grow an audience, you have to add content to your account that other users consider valuable, and you have to add it regularly. What’s more, if you expect to keep those users coming back, you have to nurture the relationships you create there.

If you set up an account on a social network, for example, you might need to update your status once or twice a day. (Carnival Cruise Lines, one of the most successful social media marketers out there, typically updates its status twice a day.) If you’re using Twitter, the recommended minimum is going to be more like five to ten times a day. And you have to respond to your visitors’ comments and
questions, too. There’s really nothing less interesting to members of social media communities than an account that hasn’t been updated in a while or that doesn’t respond to user input. Think about it: Would you return to an unresponsive site with stale content?

Keeping up with these social media marketing activities has proved to be so time-consuming. A 2009 study conducted by Wetpaint and the Altimeter Group found, among other things, that successful social media marketing campaigns at the large, corporate level involved dedicated teams within the company focused exclusively on social media. However, smaller organizations without the option of dedicating personnel to their sites, outsource the job, the way a landlord might hire a property manager to run her apartment buildings. The result is a cottage industry of specialists who want to manage your social media accounts.

**Social Media Daily: What to Do with Half an Hour a Day**

When big companies take on the challenge of social media marketing, they can do it with whole
marketing departments and lots of dedicated resources. If you’re a small company or an individual, chances are you don’t have lots of time and talent to devote to social media. But you probably *do* have a half-hour a day. Here’s what you should do with that half-hour:

- Check for direct messages on each of the Big Three sites and respond to them as quickly and thoroughly as possible.
- Respond to anything posted on your Facebook Wall.
- Tweet and retweet (or respond to a tweet) at least five different items every day. This is the easiest way to participate in Twitter. You’ll learn more about this in *Chapter 5*.
- Ask a question. This is one of the best ways to spark a conversation, which generates the interactivity you want on social media sites. There’s nothing wrong with asking industry-related questions. Ask about an article you read online and include the link. If your company is offering a new product, ask for opinions about a specific feature.
- Respond to invitations and accept any that make sense to your overall plan.
• Write a recommendation for at least one of your LinkedIn contacts. Recommendations are highly prized and much appreciated on this social network. This is a public endorsement to professionals. Make sure you really mean it.
• Ask for a recommendation from a LinkedIn contact. LinkedIn recommendations are valuable additions to your company’s identity and to your own personal brand.
• Once a day, check for mentions of your company and/or yourself on these sites.

**Is It Worth Thirty Minutes at Day?**

One of the most common mistakes companies make with their social media campaigns is to start out with huge investments of time for the first few weeks—say, six or seven hours a day—and then get disappointed when they don’t see a wave of new customers at the end of those two weeks. Then they cut back to five minutes a day, and then eventually they cut back to nothing.

*This is the well-worn path to failure. Don’t walk down it.*
Avoid the temptation to go all out with your campaign in the first few days or weeks. Especially if you own a small business or are responsible for a sales or marketing department in which you yourself are a major contributor, *do not follow this “all out” pattern.* You will burn out, get frustrated, and fail.

Finish this book. Stick to the provided list. Give yourself, say, forty-five minutes to complete it for the first few days. Then learn to complete it in thirty minutes. Then do that every day.
Compelling Content

Your job is to post compelling content that is related to your company *but doesn’t push a particular product or service*. If you’re a hotel, for example, publish status updates and tweets about recreational activities in your city. Include photos and videos of the sites. Mention restaurants and shows. But whatever you do, don’t mention room rates!
Chapter 3

Social Marketing Essentials

To make sense of what follows in the later chapters of this book, and to be able to implement the ideas shared in those chapters, you will need to master (or perhaps refamiliarize yourself with) some core concepts. This chapter covers a few of those concepts.

Push Versus Pull

Effective social media marketing is closest conceptually to what is known as pull marketing. Unlike push marketing, which involves a salesperson, a pitch, an ad, or an effort to convince a customer to take action, pull marketing is indirect. It employs strategies that build brand authority, influence, and visibility, which essentially attract buyer to seller. Think, “If you build it, they will come.” Or better yet, “If you add value, they will
pay attention to you and tell other people about you.”

Push marketing is unwelcome on social media sites. Advertising appears on these sites, of course, and is often the source of the service’s revenue. But you’ll notice that it’s segregated from the status updates and other user-generated content. In fact, it’s almost a standard now to divide a social media main page into thirds: the left column displays the tools, the center is for user content, and the right cycles the ads and sponsored content.

Users of these services put up with the ads as a necessary evil. The spaces in which users interact is the very last place they want to see anyone pushing a product. It’ll be perceived as spammy and ignored or even blocked.

It’s useful to understand this fundamental quality of social media at the outset so you don’t become frustrated or impatient when you don’t see quick results. Building your brand, developing relationships, and earning your reputation takes time, so approach social media marketing as a long-term strategy. You’re planting a garden, not raising a barn.
However, once you’ve established your reputation, it is possible to leverage it occasionally to generate short-term results. For example, you can use promotions, such as special events and time-limited product or service discounts, aimed exclusively at your audience/community. It’s push marketing, but from a trusted source. The key is not to violate that trust, and to be sure that the promotion adds value to your relationships.

It’s Not the Pitch; It’s the Conversation

This type of marketing is about joining a community and connecting with its members. It’s about getting the attention of the influencers, the bloggers and Twitterers whose opinions and recommendations carry a lot of weight on the social web. It’s also about establishing your own influence, reputation, and brand within communities of potential customers, fans, and/or supporters. In other words, it’s about the conversation.

The way you earn a positive reputation on the social web—and, thus, meet your goals—is by
participating, sharing, and with a fair amount of transparency.

CASE STUDY

Consider Zappos.com (www.zappos.com). The online shoe and merchandise company may be the most cited example of effective pull marketing on the social web. The company maintains a presence on Facebook, but it’s the Twitter connection that gets most of the press. The company was one of the first to embrace the microblogging service. Zappos employees have Twitter accounts, and they’re encouraged to tweet about work and their own lives. The company’s CEO, Tony Hsieh, has nearly 2 million followers on Twitter.

The company maintains a dedicated page on Twitter where it aggregates all of these tweetstreams. The page highlights key words that link back to search-result pages in the Zappos catalog.

What comes through is a company with a likeable personality and a human face that its many followers can relate to. That transparency engenders
trust. It shows that there are people behind the organization. And, apparently, it sells a lot of shoes.

**Back to Fundamentals**

Social media marketing differs in many ways from traditional marketing, but it’s still marketing. You’ll have better success with your social media marketing plan when you can answer the following three questions.

**What’s My Value Proposition?**

In other words, What’s in this for my customers? Why should they buy from me? Or, What are they getting out of their interactions with me? What makes me, my company, my product, my service, or my cause different from all the others out there? What sets me apart? What makes me the one my customers should choose?

This is such a basic marketing practice that it almost goes without saying, but it’s easy to forget the basics when you’re maneuvering in a new environment. Also remember that a strong value proposition can

**Who’s My Audience?**

Again, this is basic marketing strategy, but it’s essential to ask this question. The good news: You’re on a social media platform, which is all about sharing personal information. It’s hard to overstate the power of these media sites to show you who your audience is, what they care about, and what motivates them. Some of these platforms even provide tools to help you get to know your audience. Facebook, for example, has a tool called Insights that measures things like user exposure, actions, and behavior relating to your Facebook page. You can track user growth trends, demographics, consumption of your content, and creation of content.

**What Are My Goals?**

Sit down and think about what you want to accomplish with your social media marketing efforts. Even the best metrics will have little
meaning if you don’t set some goals. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Drive traffic to my website
- Increase sales of my book/consulting services/billable hours/whatever
- Generate referrals
- Build a community of like-minded people
- Rally others to my cause
- Find leads
- Increase membership participation
- Develop a reputation as an expert
- Boost sales of a product or service
- Gauge interest in a product, service, or event.
- Strengthen relationships with customers
- Decrease bad publicity
- Grow the business
- Foster new professional relationships
- Spread a message
- Expand my network
- Monitor my brand

These last two goals are as basic as it gets, and given the current level of participation in social media worldwide, something of a minimum for just about
every company. Nowadays, having a presence on social media is a must. The good news is that you’re halfway there because your company is most likely mentioned on the web already, whether you monitor it or not.

It’s Not All about Your Products

Blowing your own horn too much on the social web is a sign that you’re there to sell something, and that turns people off. Instead, be useful, friendly, funny, and a resource for reliable links and recommendations that fit your profile, but don’t necessarily pitch your products.

Of course, you don’t have to pretend you’re not in business. Being transparent and honest can fairly translate into content about your company. The key is to make it valuable to others.

When you look at your content, ask yourself three questions: Is it unique? Is it useful? Is it fun? If the answer is yes to two out of three of those questions, your content is probably worth the time of the other members, and that’s exactly what you’re going for.
When you do engage with other members of a social media community, lose the formality. Make your messages conversational and personal. If you use marketing speak or canned responses, you’ll sound like a robot.

Part of the value of social media for marketing is its ability not only to deliver your message to customers and potential customers but to allow them to speak to you. The social web, remember, is a two-way street, so the content you create in that environment becomes part of an ongoing conversation.

This is where a lot of people new to social media marketing seem to drop the ball. They forget that these are participatory software platforms, that the people they want to reach there are not passive consumers of content but active creators of it.

### Scheduling Your Updates and Interactions

The best way to keep your social media conversations under control is to establish a posting schedule and stick to it. You want your fans to be able to rely on a steady stream of information; get
spotty, and you lose their attention. This is where the social media tools and dashboards with scheduling features come in handy. If you’re using, say, HootSuite, you can schedule hourly status updates to run throughout the day and then jump on when something interesting happens or you need to respond to a fan comment or post.

Another good way to keep up with the network is to follow a blog or information site devoted to that community or service. The Internet is rife with them. One good example is All Facebook: The Unofficial Facebook Blog (www.allfacebook.com).

It’s All about Relationships

The real power of social media comes from its ability to allow you to foster relationships and connect with your customers. In fact, your core objective should be to build relationships. It’s the foundation of any social media marketing plan. Whether you’re trying to sell more skateboards, alert people to the plight of the blue-bellied parrot, or establish your reputation as a master of the three-egg omelet, it’s all about relationships.
And not just any relationship. You want to foster positive relationships. Useful, dynamic, entertaining, and reciprocal relationships. That goal might seem obvious, but it’s worth underscoring. It’s important to keep in mind that your aim is to become a valued member of a network with two-way, usually public, communication channels. You might be there to promote yourself or your products, but you only add value to the network when you become a participant who cares as much about what is being said as what you want to say.

Positive relationships on a social network are extremely valuable and extremely important strategically. If you’re liked and respected, other members will help you to spread the word and will do your marketing for you. So never, ever lose your cool online! You cannot afford to burn bridges. Build your relationships one person at a time, with your reputation in mind … always.

The Rubber Meets the Road

It’s time to get to the heart of the matter. In the next few chapters, you’ll get a detailed explanation of the very best ways to create and implement winning
marketing strategies using Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Ready?
Strategic Content

The best social media marketing content is open, authentic, and free of product or brand hype. In fact, effective social media marketers don’t actually talk about themselves very much. They talk about and recommend others.
Chapter 4

Facebook Marketing

“You don’t get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies.” So reads the tag line for the Hollywood film *The Social Network*, which tells the true-life (more or less) story of Mark Zuckerberg’s launch of the site that, as of this writing, anyway, massively dominates the landscape of social media.

It’s a Facebook World

Facebook accounts for something in the neighborhood of 92 percent of all social networking site use, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (June, 2011).

Truth be told, though, the total is now closer to 750 million Facebook users. At the rate the site is going,
1 billion users looks pretty much like an inevitability. There are currently only about 7 billion people on the planet; you can do the math from there.

The days when people didn’t use the site to keep track of friends, catch up with long-lost relatives, remember people’s birthdays, share videos they like, or play FarmVille or Mafia Wars seems very long ago indeed. Yet for all its ubiquity, Facebook has not, in the grand scheme of things, been around for all that long. It was founded in 2004. Less than a decade later, approximately 41 percent of the U.S. adult population has a Facebook account. And yes, that number is going up. That astonishing trajectory continues to give marketers in virtually all industries goose bumps. If you were thinking of ignoring Facebook in your social media marketing campaign, don’t.

**Facebook Tools**

Facebook provides a number of free tools that are especially useful to social media marketers, including *Pages*, *Groups*, and *Places*, as well as the ability to buy advertising through Facebook Ads.
You have to join the network before you have access to the free tools. Chances are, if you’re reading these words, you’re already a member; if you’re not, though, just point your browser to the Facebook home page (www.facebook.com); enter your name, e-mail address, a password, your gender, and your birthday; click “Sign Up;” and you’re on your way.

Pages

Facebook Pages are essentially profile pages for businesses, organizations, and public figures. They provide an in-network venue for supporters of your company, your products, and/or you to interact and participate in discussions about your business/activities.

Page layout is very similar, with a central space for the latest status updates (called the Wall), a picture bar across the top, and bordering columns of tool buttons, links, and cycling, targeted advertising. Page owners can now share their status updates just as Facebook members do from their Profile pages. All Page updates appear prominently in the home page News Feeds of fans of the Page, mixed in with updates from their friends. The new Page design also allows Page owners to separate user comments
posted on the Wall from updates posted by the Page owner.

Whenever a Facebook user becomes a fan of your Page—that is, she “likes” your page—her friends can easily hear about it. Any interaction that appears on your Page also appears on their Wall, to which all of your fan’s friends have access. This is a potentially huge amount of exposure. Don’t be shy about spreading the word to your friends; they’re your friends, after all, and so chances are pretty good they’ll be glad to learn about your business and help you get the word out.

Another advantage of Pages: you don’t have to be a member of the network to see them. So, although the millions and millions of Facebook users might be the most likely viewers of your Page, anyone in the world with an Internet connection and a web browser can also see it. Facebook Pages are even indexed by the major search engines as though they were regular webpages.

Don’t forget to let people outside the network know that you have a Facebook Page. Do it through your website, your blog, e-mail blast, or a newsletter. Include “Join us on Facebook” in all your offline promotions and advertising.
**Facebook Pages That Work**

Facebook Pages will probably be your primary marketing platform in this social network, so it makes sense to look around to see what has worked for others. Go ahead and explore—just search on company names and see what pops up. But while you’re at it, check out these Facebook Pages that drew heavy traffic in early 2011:

- **Starbucks**
  (www.facebook.com/Starbucks)
- **Zappos**
  (www.facebook.com/zappos)
- **Harley-Davidson**
  (www.facebook.com/harley-davidson)
- **Best Buy**
  (www.facebook.com/bestbuy)
- **Disney’s Toy Story**
  (www.facebook.com/PixarToyStory)
- **Delta Air Lines**
  (www.facebook.com/delta)

You’ll get more on specific marketing strategies you can use with Facebook Pages a little later on in the chapter.
Community Pages

Facebook’s Community Pages are generic, network-maintained Pages about very broad topics. As Facebook puts it, Community Pages “are for general topics and all kinds of unofficial but interesting things …” I mention them here for the sake of thoroughness, but the reality is that the network-administered pages are not likely to play a huge contributing role in your marketing campaign. They are meant to present “the best collection of shared knowledge on a topic” that is of interest to significant-sized groups (like cooking, cycling, and hiking). Most of the Facebook-administered Community Pages are built around content from Wikipedia. Your marketing best practices here are pretty simple: monitor Facebook regularly, using the Search app (www.facebook.com/search) for references to your products, services, and brands that show up on the Community Pages—or anywhere else on Facebook for that matter. Do your level best to keep the relevant Wikipedia pages that affect or mention your brands up to date. Check in regularly to see what’s going on the discussion boards, though it has to be noted that frequently, on these pages, nothing is.
Groups
These are generally consumer-to-consumer gathering spots designed especially for people who share a common, clearly defined interest or cause (such as keeping a local park from being turned into a parking lot). Groups differ most dramatically from Pages in their inability to share apps, in their ability to exclude members, in their generally lower likelihood of showing up in a search engine query, and in their capacity to send messages directly to a Facebook user’s Inbox. This sought-after feature evaporates, however, once your group exceeds a certain size. As with Community Pages, your best marketing practice here is probably just to monitor what’s going on by plugging key terms into the Search feature and to keep an eye out for conversations that might impact your brand.

Places
Facebook launched Places in 2010, staking its claim in the hot local-sharing market pioneered by services like Gowalla, foursquare, and Loopt. Places is a location-based feature permitting Facebook users to share where they are and learn where their friends are (and have been). The feature requires the use of
an iPhone, Blackberry, Android, HP webOS, or Windows Phone 7—or a trip to www.touch.facebook.com.

CASE STUDY

The U.K. tourist agency VisitBritain (www.visitbritain.com) put together an interesting, and successful, campaign using the Places feature to identify the most popular landmarks in the United Kingdom—according to the Facebook users who took part. This “global guest book for Britain” resulted in a 34 percent increase in VisitBritain fans in just a couple of weeks and sparked a quarter of a million visits to the automatically updated Top 50 UK Places board. The campaign was part of a larger geographically focused advertising initiative that specifically targeted “users in countries with strong connections to the UK—the United States, Italy, Spain, Japan, and India—and then identified English-speaking users within those countries.” VisitBritain also targeted users who were over twenty-one years old and had graduated from college, on the theory that this group was the
likeliest to travel to the United Kingdom. Targeting the group even further, VisitBritain sent ads to users whose listed interests like “London,” “heritage,” “travel,” and “royalty” in their profiles. By combining the targeted ads with the Top 50 ranking and some careful posting of discussion topics on its page, VisitBritain grew the total number of Facebook followers on its Love UK page from 2,000 to over 400,000 in less than a year.

To learn more about innovative ways to integrate Facebook Places into your marketing mix, visit www.facebook.com/places.

**The Marketing Value of Your Profile**

In today’s social media environment, a lot of people feel more comfortable following people rather than institutions. That’s one very good reason to make sure your personal profile is business friendly. As it turns out, this is also a pretty good low-cost strategy for generating new sales leads and extending your business network.
If you’re already using Facebook for personal networking, it’s entirely possible that you chose the most private settings for your profile. Consider, though, that prospective buyers like to look behind your company’s Page, hoping to find deeper insights into the kind of people they’re doing business with. You might want to consider making your picture and contact information publicly viewable so that potential customers, employers, and fans will see it. Keep (at least) those aspects of your profile professional. Don’t use rough language, and keep all your humor within professional boundaries. Make sure the picture you post is one you’d like your best customer to point prospective buyers towards.

Another reason you should pay close attention to the business orientation of your profile is that Facebook doesn’t allow owners of Pages to reach out to potential friends. You can only do that from your profile page! Your Facebook friends can help you to spark interest in your Page. Ask them to become fans, and to invite their friends to become fans.

The bottom line here, as you may have already gathered, is that for entrepreneurs, business owners, and marketing people, separating your business self and your personal self on Facebook is pretty
difficult. In fact, it is recommended that you don’t even try to keep them separate. You are who you are. People are watching. Go with it.

Depending on the type of business you operate, you might want to display things like store hours of operation and contact information. You might also want to include links to websites—yours and related sites, perhaps a news site with a report on your company or product—and maybe notices of upcoming events and related details. But remember the environment: This is a social network, a platform from which you carry on the social media conversation with your fans and customers and prospects. What will keep those people coming back to your Page is your status updates.

**Content Strategy**

Quality content, *when delivered consistently*, can turn your Facebook Page into a gathering place for direct fans. It can also potentially become an influential communications hub on related topics.

So, what is quality content? Well, of course, you’ll be displaying text and photos on your Facebook Page, and maybe videos about your company, your product, and your service, but make sure that what
you post has no possibility of being mistaken for outright advertising. Bear this simple principle in mind: *Sales pitches on Facebook equal instant failure: conversations equal eventual success.*

CASE STUDY

If you’re looking for a good role model that will help you to tell the difference between alienating sales pitch content and engaging conversations on Facebook, one of the best is Carnival Cruise Lines ([www.carnival.com](http://www.carnival.com)). Its interactive 150 Reasons to Cruise theme asks visitors to share their own reasons for taking a cruise. The company’s new Page content, delivered via status updates and posted consistently once or twice a day, does *not* take the form of a direct appeal to book a trip with Carnival. Instead, it’s questions, contests, and opportunities to interact with friends and family who have taken a Carnival cruise. (This last piece is particularly important, given the importance that online recommendations from friends and family now play in purchase decisions.) A typical update reads:
She’s been sailing for over two months now. If you’ve had a chance to experience Carnival Magic, what onboard was your favorite feature? Carnival Waterworks? Or Cucina del Capitano? Maybe the RedFrog Pub? If you haven’t had the chance yet, which space would you most look forward to visiting?

“Carnival Magic,” of course, is a new cruise ship. This one, simple message to recent customers generated 295 likes and 236 comments, which are pretty darn good numbers. Remember that each and every one of those comments was pushed through to all of that user’s friends and family member feeds!

Make Sure Your Status Updates Are Effective

It should go without saying that what you post on your Page’s Wall should always be civil and in good taste, that everything should be spelled properly (including the web slang, like OMG, LOL, etc.) but written with an informal tone. Posts should also be relatively short and to the point. If you ramble on for too long, Facebook will only post the beginning of
what you’ve written, which is not good. Notice that the Carnival Cruise update in the case study above ran just forty-nine words, which is a good length to shoot for.

Be mindful of the following list of status update do’s and don’ts:

• *Post regularly.* Remember, it’s a conversation, so you need to keep it going.
• *Post relevantly.* Stick to your area of expertise, your company, and your products, but keep it light and friendly.
• *Post generously:* Point your visitors to other great resources. Solve a problem. Give advice.
• *Post inquiringly:* Nothing generates engagement like a question. Ask your fans about your products or services, or about their current interests in some specific area, or about a positive memory or association. Make sure it is easy to respond to your question. This is not homework! (A great example from Carnival Cruise Lines is, “When you think about your last Carnival Cruise, what’s the first thing that pops into
your head?” This simple question generated 2,748 comments!

Focus on the Influencers

The old 80/20 rule is closer to 90/10 on a social network. A small percentage of your community is responsible for most of the activity on your Page, so give these people the attention and praise they deserve.

Keep things clean and simple. Don’t make your visitors work to find things.

One item you’ll want to pay special attention to is your landing page. Facebook allows you to decide what your visitors see first when they visit your Page. You can vary your landing page to spotlight promotions, new products, and events. The photos you choose to highlight on this page are important visuals.

Another important tool for customizing your Facebook Page is iFrames. This gives you a simpler
way to create and share dynamic apps using standard web development tools.

There are lots of vendors out there with Facebook design products that are affordable or even free. Several are listed in Chapter 7. One standout free tool is Pagemodo’s Pagebuilder. This is a template-based tool for designing and creating Facebook Pages. The tool is dead easy to use for developing custom business/fan Pages as well as for integrating images, videos, and forms. You build your Page on the Pagemodo website, and then Pagebuilder uploads it to Facebook.

Cool Tools for Facebook

Here are some great Facebook tools to keep on your radar. Unless otherwise noted, you should just add “.com” to the name and eliminate spaces to find each service. (That goes for all the external tools you’ll find referenced in this book.)

Facebook Social Plugins

Facebook’s social plugins reach beyond the social network to add Facebook features to your website.
The plugins include:

- A version of the like button that lets users share pages from your site with their Facebook friends
- An activity feed plugin that shows users what their friends are doing on your site through likes and comments
- A recommendations plugin designed to give users personalized suggestions for pages on your site that they might like
- The Like Box, which allows users to like your Facebook Page and view its stream directly from your website
- A login button that shows profile pictures of a user’s friends who have already signed up for your site
- A registration plugin that makes it easy for users to sign up for your website with their Facebook account
- Facepile, which displays the Facebook profile pictures of users who have liked your page or have signed up for your site
- A comments plugin
• Live Stream, which allows visitors to your website to share activity and comments in real time as they interact during a live event.

**Wildfire Promotion Builder**

Wildfire is an online software application for creating interactive marketing campaigns—sweepstakes, contests, giveaways, incentive-based surveys, and user-generated content promotions—through social media. The tool allows you to implement the campaigns simultaneously in multiple social networks and on your website. Reportedly, Wildfire has worked closely with Facebook to make sure that it follows the social network’s guidelines.

**Pagebuilder**

Pagemodo’s Pagebuilder (previously mentioned) is a template-based tool for designing and creating Facebook Pages for businesses. The tool is a snap to use for developing custom fan pages, complete with images, videos, and forms. Pagebuilder is provided as a free service. You build your page on the website, and then Pagebuilder uploads it to Facebook.
**Networked Blogs**

This tool allows you to list your blog on a Facebook-based blog directory. The idea is to make it easy for Facebook members to connect to it through the social network. Once you set up an account, you have the option of automatically posting your blog articles to your Facebook business page. And you get listed in the directory. The app is free.

**Shoutworthy**

This tool is designed to allow users send and collect professional recommendations from friends and colleagues. You can post a shoutout to a new hire, a coworker on a project, or whoever via Facebook and other social networks. You sign up with the service through Facebook, and then send shoutouts to your connections, which get posted on their Wall.

**Storefront Social**

This is an app designed to allow Facebook users to create a shopping experience for their fans directly on the fan Page. Visitors can click “Buy Now” and automatically connect to a shopping cart. It also comes with tools for highlighting products, for
encouraging people to share, and for offering discounts.

**Liveworld’s Facebook Forum**

This isn’t exactly a tool, but the Facebook Forum makes it easier to manage the communities you build around your fan pages. It’s designed to allow companies to quickly and easily respond to and moderate Facebook comments. It also provides a set of social media metrics for your Page, including unique visitors, subscription e-mails, and active threads, among others. As the company puts it, “LiveWorld Facebook Forum presents a deeper conversational option while keeping the Facebook experience intact.”

**Visualizing Your Facebook Network**

Several network visualization tools have hit the market in recent years. Each employs a different scheme to create a graphical representation of your Facebook connections, and each provides varying degrees of access to your network through that graphic. Among the current crop, you’ll want to check out Friend Wheel, the Facebook Visualizer, and the TouchGraph.
Marketing on Facebook: Try This

What can you do right now to market your business on Facebook? Consider the following ideas.

FOUR LOW- OR NO-COST FACEBOOK MARKETING STRATEGIES

1. Spread the word through your profile

Linking your company Page to your own profile is a good way to grab a big chunk of fans in the form of your friends, and their friends. Allowing employees to link to the company Page can have a humanizing effect on any enterprise.

2. Spread the word in Facebook groups

As suggested earlier, you can use Facebook’s search tool to find related groups. Post messages there about your Page! First, request permission to post from the group’s administrators. Avoid posting a bunch of unsolicited, self-promoting messages on the group’s Wall. Keep it light and conversational. Once you build a following, you’ll be able to include more specific information.

3. Spread the word via e-mail
If you’ve got a mailing list, send out your Facebook Page address (URL) and invite your contacts to become fans.

4. Support what you have to say on Facebook with Twitter

Come up with a shorter version of your latest status update and post it on Twitter. (See chapter 5.)

TWO SOMEWHAT MORE EXPENSIVE FACEBOOK MARKETING STRATEGIES

1. Spread the word through Sponsored Stories

An exciting, relatively new feature, Sponsored Stories is a Facebook Ad app that turns the (unscripted) actions of fans into what amounts to ad copy that goes out to the ads columns on their friends’ Pages. You can pay to have these actions (such as a decision to like a certain Page) show up in the ad columns of targeted audiences. This is the most promising and cost-effective Facebook ad program for business marketers, large or small.

CASE STUDY
Artweb.com (www.artweb.com), which allows users to “browse and buy from over 129,000 works of art,” ran a detailed comparison of Sponsored Stories against standard Facebook Ads and found that they delivered four times better cost performance and delivered new fans for the remarkably low price of just 29 cents each. To see the case study, visit www.mrkirkland.com/increase-facebook-fans-case-study-sponsored-vs-advert.

To learn more about Sponsored Stories, visit www.facebook.com/ads/stories.

Of course, you can also:

2. **Spread the word through other Facebook targeted advertising campaigns**

Facebook is one of the most successful advertising mediums on earth. Why? According to Facebook, it’s because users consider it “an authentic part of their lives.” It’s hard to disagree.
CASE STUDY

A great example of a success story using Facebook and more traditional online advertisements would be CM Photographics (www.cm-photographics.com), which turned a $600 ad investment in the site into a $40,000 revenue stream. According to the company, fully 60 percent of the Facebook users who were directed to the company’s website ended up being qualified leads who requested more information, a pretty remarkable conversion rate. There are a lot of moving parts in any online advertising campaign, of course, and you shouldn’t assume that your $600 investment will deliver that kind of return. With that disclaimer out of the way, however, it should be noted that the CEO of CM Photographs had this to say about working with Facebook: “My business wouldn’t be anywhere close to where it is today if it weren’t for Facebook, and the ads campaign.”

A Final Word of Warning

Like traffic lights, the Super Bowl, and the Internet itself, Facebook has become one of those institutions
that transcends questions of whether or not you actually like it. It’s just there: something that you encounter and use, something you can no longer realistically expect to ignore completely, something that doesn’t seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. Facebook’s influence has now become so widespread, and has played out in so many ways, that many of its users simply take it for granted, like electricity or water. (That is, when they’re not wondering how to regulate it.) It is huge. It is impossible to summarize accurately in a chapter this size. And it is, increasingly, how business is done online.

What does that mean to you? It means that Facebook is, potentially at least, an incredibly efficient advertising and promotional medium. But you have to be careful. Facebook may well be delivering great results for marketers big and small, but you can still screw up a Facebook campaign. How? By not being an engaged member of the Facebook community yourself, which is, a pretty shrewd precondition for success for any advertising platform. In fact, it’s hard to believe Facebook didn’t plan it that way.

Even though Mark Zuckerberg is probably smiling in self-satisfaction at the following advice, use
Facebook *daily* yourself for a month or so before embarking on any Facebook-driven ad campaign. The more authentic a part of your life Facebook is, the more likely your investment of time, effort, attention, and/or money is to pay off.

Just watch out for Facebook addiction disorder. And, no, that is not a joke.
Customizing Your Page

Many Page owners pay for custom layouts and designs, but if you’re a small business with a tight marketing budget, you can probably get by with Facebook’s own customization tools, which are excellent. They allow you to rearrange the layout, upload photos and logos, or display videos.
Chapter 5

The Twitter Advantage

Unlike social networks like Facebook, Twitter isn’t about building communities but rather about sharing news, knowledge, opinions, and ideas. It’s about real-time communication in an information network. Consequently, it’s a terrific tool for creating conversations about your business or customers and for monitoring your competitors. It’s also a great place to tune into industry buzz, and to direct buzz about you and your business.

A Quick Overview

Twitter is a microblog, which means that the messages its members share are short. In Twitter’s case, messages can only run 140 characters. Here’s an example:
One such message is known as a “tweet,” and believe it or not, this sentence is about as long as a tweet is allowed to run: 139 characters.

As a blog, Twitter is a one-to-many information distribution system: one person posts a message that lots of people read (or don’t read, depending on their interest in the topic). Twitter users post tweets that share knowledge with a global group of potentially interested readers. Since Twitter is open to anyone, it’s the perfect medium to get the word out about your products or business in a powerful way.

Member messages flow into the great tweetstream, sharing information with thousands of other tweeters instantly. Tweets are now showing up in Google searches, thanks to the search engine giant’s decision to add real-time search to its capabilities. LinkedIn, the leading business-oriented social network, gives its members the option to post their tweets, just like Facebook status updates.

**How It Works**

Twitter users access the site’s content by following people—essentially, by subscribing to a wealth of individual tweetstreams. Whenever you add someone to your list, you choose to have the system
send that person’s tweets automatically onto an ever-changing feed that’s displayed on your home page. Those tweets arrive virtually as soon they’re posted, in more or less real time, and they’re displayed in reverse chronological order, just as in a standard blog. The latest stuff is up top.

Generating followers—better known as “tweeps” (a contraction of “tweet” and “peeps”)—is the core goal of your Twitter social media marketing activities. The more followers you have, the more likely someone is to notice, respond to, and/or circulate your message—and connect with you and your company.

Twitter limits the number of people you can follow to 2,000, and you’re limited in the number of tweets you can send to 1,000 per day and the direct messages to 250 per day. This sounds limited, until you realize that there’s no limit to the number of people who can follow you. High-profile tweeters, such as Oprah Winfrey, count their followers in the millions. That’s probably not going to happen to you overnight if you’re just getting started with your Twitter account, but the goal is the same: to get as many people interested in your business and what it brings to the conversation that they stay engaged.
Getting the Conversation Started

If you want to make it easier for people to find and follow you on Twitter, you can start by keeping your user name simple and direct. Once you’ve set up your Twitter profile with your business name and location, you can start looking for potential new clients to follow using the Find People function. Start with customers, clients, and colleagues you already know or know about. When you find someone new, peek into his profile and see who he is following and who’s following him.

The best way to begin the process of being followed on Twitter is pretty simple: Follow other people, and offer genuine, person-to-person comments on what others have tweeted. DO NOT post advertising copy in your tweets!

The Fine Art of the Tweet

Sending a tweet is really easy. You just type your message into the box at the top of your home page under the “What’s happening?” heading. A counter on the right starts at 140 and counts down as you type. Spaces and punctuation count. If you go over, you can’t send the tweet until you whittle it down.
Sending a tweet is easy, but getting your point across in 140 characters or less takes a little practice.

But what kind of marketing information can you cram into 140 characters? As you practice the fine art of 140-character messaging, you’ll find you can do a lot: a big contract your company just got, a new product, a terrific recommendation, a good quarterly report, a milestone anniversary. Whatever will keep the tweetstream moving in your direction will work. Good news can bring new business.

**Some Twitter Basics**

To succeed in this space, you will need to know what the following terms mean.

**Retweets**

Sometimes you see a tweet that you just have to share with your followers, not all of whom may have seen it. That’s where “retweets” come in. A retweet is a tweet that amounts to a “What he said.” Whether you’re sharing a shrewd observation, a good insight, or some hot industry news, retweets will put you in the center of the conversation.
Replies

On Twitter, a “reply” is a tweet that is aimed directly at another Twitter user in response to a specific tweet. Reply messages start with the @ sign, followed directly by the user name and then the message. They look like this: “@susansmith Wow, thank you so much.” You start a reply by clicking on the Reply button next to the tweet in question. Keep in mind that replies are public; assume that everyone can read them, whether they are following you or not, since replies can also be quoted and circulated freely.

Replies keep the conversation lively so long as you reply quickly. Don’t miss a chance to keep the conversation going. You’ll be able to turn it around to your agenda. Give and take makes for good business contacts.

Direct Messages

If you want to keep your reply just between you and the tweeter, you can send her what Twitter calls a “direct message.” Whereas a reply can go out to anyone whose tweet you’ve come across, direct messages can only be sent to the people who are following you. They carry weight because they are
private, so save it for the really significant information you want to share.

**Hashtags**

A *hashtag* is a simplified symbol format used to group tweets around an event, news item, or topic. It’s called a hashtag because the keyword is literally tagged with the hash or pound sign (#). A hashtag looks like this: #nowplaying, #rsa, #Shakespeare, #denimjeans. The beauty of the system is you can add the hash sign to the beginning of any word to connect your message to a topic, as in: “I’m waiting on the latest quotes on materials from China from my rep at #Amco United.” Once you include a hashtag with your tweet, it gets included in the category represented by whatever word, phrase, or acronym that follows the hash sign. So in this case, any other messages that have #Amco in them show up in a search of that hashtag.

A hashtag serves the same function as a topic on a discussion group, but Twitter’s speed makes the process of following a discussion much more dynamic and engaging for those who choose to follow a given hashtag. A number of helpful third-party services track Twitter hashtags. The best
known is probably Hashtag.org, but the list also includes sites like TwitterGroups, TweetChat, TweetGrid, and Twitterfall, among others.

**What to Tweet?**

The standard answer to that question is, anything you want. But serious social media marketers will use Twitter and tweets to get their business message out to their followers. Vary your Twitter content as follows:

- **In the moment**
  If you are actually doing something likely to be interesting to customers and prospective customers, by all means let your tweeps know about it. For example: “Attending an awesome seminar on outsourcing...Found out they’re replaying it on the website [URL] later this month.”

- **References to other content**
  You should definitely find industry news articles and websites worth recommending to your customers, and include relevant
links. This is one of the easiest and fastest ways to make yourself worth following.

• **Product updates**
  Go ahead and tweet about product updates if there’s actually something new and important to report. DO NOT dump your entire catalog or price sheet on your followers, however.

• **Questions**
  With your marketing goals in mind, go ahead and ask industry-related questions, but try to ask questions you and your customers would actually like answered.

• **Quick polls**
  One great way to do this is to conduct a poll. Running polls on Twitter is a common activity, one worth trying. Use a common hash tag (#spaghettipoll) so that your questions and answers are tied together. This is a good way to gather information and insights on a topic, connect with new people, and build your own reputation.
• **Countdowns**

This is a very cool way to build interest, anticipation, and even suspense for an upcoming event in which you are involved—say, a webcast, or the publication of a book, or debut of a new product. Here’s an example of how to begin a countdown:

“Hosting my first webcast http://tinyurl.com/277v3za for ADTmag, SEP 22 Topic: Agile ALM. @BolaRotibi keynotes. Mark the date!”

**Tools for Twitter**

Twitter has spawned a sprawling ecosystem of third-party tool vendors. Some of these are simple, single-purpose tools; others combine features to provide a suite of twitter-focused tech. Unless otherwise noted, you should just add “.com” to the name and eliminate spaces to find each service.

**Social Flow**

Social Flow is designed for media companies, brand marketers, and online retailers looking to drive traffic to their websites and grow their audiences
through social media. The software monitors what your followers, friends, fans, and connections are interested in and talking about in real time. And it pairs your Tweets and status updates with a compatible audience. It keeps the resulting “potential messages” in a Content Queue and constantly updates the list. The company says, “Think of what we do as actionable real-time intelligence at scale.”

**CoTweet**

CoTweet is a web-based social media engagement, management, and reporting solution. It’s aimed at organizations with multiple Twitter accounts and/or multiple Twitter members that work as a team. It provides a number of features, including a centralized, easy-to-use dashboard for managing day-to-day social media conversation, a tweet scheduler, and a tool for assigning tweets as though they were tasks. CoTweet comes in standard and enterprise editions.

**ReSearch.ly**

Billed as a “social search platform,” ReSearch.ly is a Twitter search engine combined with sophisticated
analytics features that provides a historical analysis of tweets going back as far as three years. The tool also supports custom indexes built on top of the full-feed tweetstream, including categories like gender, sentiment, location, and degrees of separation, among others.

**Proxlet**

Proxlet is a Twitter API proxy designed to block noisy apps, filter annoying hashtags, and/or temporarily mute annoying users. The app even allows you to cut out the chatter altogether and turn Twitter into what amounts to an RSS reader that shows only tweets with links. The company recommends installing it via a Chrome Extension for Twitter.

**Twitter Grader**

Twitter Grader is a free web-based tool designed to allow users to check the power of their Twitter profile compared with millions of other users that have been graded. It shows you lists of top users, including individuals, brands, and cities. There’s a Top Women category, too.
**Friend or Follow**

This is a straightforward web-based service that shows you who’s not following you back on Twitter, who’s following you that you’re not following back, and who’s among your followers you are following back. You just type in your Twitter handle and you get a big-picture board of your followers, with tabs for each following type.

**Mr. Tweet**

This one is a personal networking assistant for Twitter. It’s helps you identify relevant followers, recommends you to other users, and regularly computes your Twitter usage statistics.

**Twitpay**

This service allows Twitterers to use the microblogging service for payments. Twitpay’s flagship product, RT2Give, is designed to enable nonprofits to raise funds over existing Twitter channels.

**TwitBacks**

A tool for customizing the background of your Twitter profile, the service provides templates but
also allows users to create their own designs. You can add photos, logos, bios, even phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Users can add links on their backgrounds to social network profiles, websites, and blogs. (Not a bad tactic for building followers.)

**Whentotweet.com**

Whentotweet.com tracks your Twitter followers, analyzes the times at which they are most likely to be tweeting, and offers a recommendation on the best time of day for you to tweet. You go to the website, type in your Twitter handle, and wait for the analysis. This is a cool tool with a unique offering.

**Twuffer**

Twuffer is an example of a service that allows Twitter users to compose a list of tweets for publication in the future. This is a bare-bones website featuring a calendar-based interface and a connection to Twitter. Scheduling tweets isn’t always merely a cynical strategy for making people think you never sleep. You might want to tweet prewritten announcements or appointment and/or
milestone reminders, or notify subscribers about upcoming podcast or video episodes.

**Twitter**

Twitter is another tweet scheduler. This solution allows Twitter users to schedule tweets on a recurring basis, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. (It calls the scheduled tweets “twaits.”) The solution supports multiple accounts and integrates with Ping.fm, the service that aggregates social media content.

**TwitPic**

A service that allows you to share photos and videos on Twitter in real time. Users can post photos or videos to the TwitPic website from their phones, from the website, or via e-mail. All popular Twitter clients have built-in support for TwitPic using the vendor’s own API.

**The Archivist**

This is a service that uses the Twitter search API to find and archive tweets. It’s designed to help you to understand trends, such as the number of tweets over time, top users and words, sentiment, etc. This
vendor doesn’t have access to the Twitter fire hose (all the tweets ever tweeted on a subject), so you aren’t guaranteed a complete historical record of a given term or search, but you do get nice graphical representations of the data, which the vendor calls “visualizations.” This is a tool to watch as the vendor expands its capabilities.

**Twitalyzer**

An analytics tool, Twitalyzer provides users with several ways to visualize their social media efforts. This web-based tool claims to be able to tell you how many people you reach in Twitter and exactly when you need to be active to reach them. It’s designed to track your activities and the activities of your Twitter followers, and it provides a number of different measures, including influence, impact, engagement, number of followers, and clout, among others. It also has a geotracking feature for more location-based targeted outreach. It offers free and paid subscriptions.

**Topsy**

This is a real-time search engine that derives its results from “the most influential conversations” on
the social Web around the search term. Topsy displays real-time results for related terms and articles plus trending topics, identifies influencers for any queried term, and shows you trackback pages for everything in its index, displaying what everyone is saying about that query.

**Marketing on Twitter: Try This**

What can you do right now to market your business on Twitter? Consider the following ideas.

**FOUR LOW- OR NO-COST TWITTER MARKETING STRATEGIES**

1. **Monitor References to Your Own Company Closely**

The main thing to remember about Twitter is that it is a tool for generating and sustaining the buzz that makes sales possible. It is great for understanding crowd-driven interest in a particular topic, and its beauty lies in its ability to engage people in conversations that relate to your brand, products, or services.

Use [www.search.twitter.com](http://www.search.twitter.com) to follow what customers, prospective customers, and anyone else
in the blogosphere is saying about you and your company. You can also use it to shine a spotlight on people who are complaining about your competitors and guide them to your business. It’s guerrilla marketing at its best.

With no upfront investment at all (other than your own time, of course), you can use Twitter to respond quickly, personally, and politely to any problems that show up in the twittersphere. Engage with customers who have a problem, help them resolve that problem, and do so in a polite, professional way and guess what? Suddenly those folks become statistically more likely to buy from you again, to place bigger orders, recommend you to their friends, and even defend you from other complaints!

CASE STUDY

Among the corporate giants using Twitter to monitor customer traffic, improve loyalty, and improve upsell numbers is Comcast (www.comcast.com), whose @comcastcares Twitter account now boasts over 52,000 followers. The company says that it monitors between 1,500 and
2,000 tweets a day that mention Comcast or its products, and responds directly to perhaps 250. The communications giant also personalizes the communications experience by using Twitter handles like @comcastbill, @comcastbonnie, and so on for each of its associates. As one Comcast executive put it, “You would never answer a phone by saying, ‘XYZ Company, what do you want?’”

2. Follow Friday (#ff).

Twitter is all about engagement, but that word scares a lot of people. How in the world are you supposed to engage prospective customers with whom you’ve never interacted? Among the most common newbie answers to this question is “Give them links to my website and/or my catalog,” but that’s usually a waste of keystrokes. (How often do you click on something like that?) Fortunately, there’s a much easier, and much more effective, way to connect with prospective customers: Follow Friday. The name derives from a popular Twitter tradition of simply tweeting the usernames of people whose accounts are worth following and following the
names with the hashtag #ff. The message you send is simplicity itself. It will highlight only the usernames of people who seem like likely prospects, and it will look like this:

#ff @thinktwiceradio @hyken @loumorgan @GregWells @grammar_girl @jacquimalpass @artduservice @speakerceo @melissagalt @pfripp @mkshift @memyself

Looks like a bunch of gobbledygook, right? Once you’ve been using Twitter for any amount of time, however, you will realize that this incredibly easy-to-assemble message carries immense impact. Imagine that each address is a client or potential client. It shows up on each user’s home page as a mention of his or her account and as an endorsement that this is a person worth following. If you’re the user @memyself, for instance, you’ll instantly know that this message means, “Hey everybody, go check out @memyself and follow that account. Cool stuff is going on over there.”

And you know what? You’ll be grateful for that. So grateful, in fact, that you’ll likely follow whoever sent that message and then return the favor. It’s the
cyber equivalent of introducing someone to someone else at a party: everybody wins.

Oh, and just in case you were wondering: People can and do circulate Follow Friday messages seven days a week. Usage of this hashtag still *peaks* on Friday, but you can send it at any time. FollowFridayHelper.com offers a great tool for automating the process. Check it out.

3. Paper.li

This innovative site ([http://paper.li](http://paper.li)) is free, incredibly simple to use, and, once you set it up properly, highly visible to your target audience. It works like a free virtual daily news page. Just give the site your Twitter login information, choose a name for your news page that will appeal to prospective customers (for instance, “Classic Cars Daily”), and then choose sources for the ongoing content of your paper. Ideally, these will be respected influencers of your prospective customers, people who tweet to the same audience but do not compete with you. Using their tweetstreams, the site creates a graphically appealing virtual newspaper for you once a day, without your having to do anything! Once you are happy with the auto settings (it will probably take a day or two for you to get it right),
you will be ready to turn on the auto-promote function. When you do, your followers will be alerted every day about the link to the newspaper with a message like this one:

Classic Cars Daily is out! bit.ly/fyEwYV > Top stories today via @CadillacFreak @BringBackCarb @smitty_chevy @porschefiend

The point here is not necessarily to get your followers to click on the shortened link that leads to your daily paper (that’s the bit.ly stuff in the tweet above) but to get the sources your daily promotional message mentions to retweet the message to their followers. Think of this as a Follow Friday message on steroids!

For examples of successful paper.li daily newspapers you can model, check out:

paper.li/PghVintageGP

paper.li/molfamily/solar-renewable-energy

paper.li/divamarketing/wedding

4. Say “Thank You” and “Wow”

Lots of people spend countless hours (and dollars) trying to figure out what kind of tweet will get
people to respond, follow their account, and ask to learn more about what they do. Two simple messages is all it takes: “Thank you” and “Wow!” guarantee responses. But the trick is you have to customize each of these messages so that the sender knows you are responding to his specific tweet. No generic message will do. So: “Thank you for the post on the best apple-picking spots. I’ve shared it w/my followers. We run a bed-and-breakfast inn in Gloucester, MA.” Or: “Wow! Great post on the Rolling Stones. I’ve shared it with my brother, a huge Stones freak. I serve rock memorabilia collectors.”

THREE NOT-SO-LOW-COST TWITTER MARKETING STRATEGIES

1. Promoted Tweets

Promoted Tweets help advertisers reach users who are not currently following them. The Promoted Tweet is amplified to a broader audience, according to the company. Twitter members can interact with a promoted tweet in the same way they interact with a regular tweet. It’s the same 140-character message, just displayed under a spotlight.
You can ensure that the Promoted Tweet finds its way into relevant searches by attaching keywords to it. If the tweet relates to a current trending topic, it will appear first when a user clicks on the topic. Twitter says it will offer Promoted Tweets on a cost-per-engagement basis. That means you pay only when a user retweets, replies to, clicks on, or favorites your Promoted Tweet. Retweeted impressions by engaged users are free and can amplify the reach and cost-effectiveness of your campaign many times over.

2. Promoted Trends

Promoted Trends throws a spotlight on time-, context-, and event-sensitive trending topics promoted by Twitter advertisers. Promoted Trends appear at the top of the Trending Topics list on Twitter and are clearly marked as “Promoted.” What these trends do is connect conversations about topics related to your brand to more people. This generates greater awareness and brand recognition. It gives you a chance to show off your knowledge and expertise about a topic to people who are interested in that topic. Think of it as promoting your brand by association.
CASE STUDY

According to the management consulting firm Bain & Company, engagement rates for campaigns based on Promoted Tweets and Promoted Trends typically come in between 3 and 10 percent but can run considerably higher. “Engagement” in this sense means “the percentage of people who, having seen a tweet or trend, actually click on it, mark a message as a favorite, or retweet it.” In 2011, Volkswagen (www.vw.com) used Promoted Tweets and Promoted Trends to help launch its new model year cars, and reportedly posted a staggering 52 percent engagement rate. As they say in the advertising world: Results not typical; actual results may vary.

3. Promoted Accounts

Promoted Accounts are part of Twitter’s recommendation engine. The feature bumps your account to the top of Twitter’s Who to Follow list, showcasing it for users who are looking for people like you to follow. This service promotes your account only to users who follow interests or brands
similar to yours. As of this writing, Twitter is still unfolding this feature, but it looks promising.

**Tweeting Means Good Business**

Today, Twitter has become a non-negotiable part of the business landscape. Its raw speed, conciseness, and extraordinary flexibility have made it the perfect complement to the community-driven experience of Facebook. As noted previously, it’s also a great place for disgruntled consumers to gather together and compare notes on what’s bugging them, which means you ignore it at your peril. (Twitter posts from just a few angry readers, for instance, sparked a massive online boycott that contributed to the downfall of Britain’s 168-year-old newspaper the *News of the World* in 2011.) Although it takes some getting used to, Twitter is definitely worth the effort. It gives you a one-on-one branding exchange with customers and prospects that has, so far, proved extremely hard to duplicate in any other space. And if you give it a couple of days, it really will grow on you.
Chapter 6

The LinkedIn Connection

LinkedIn is the world’s leading social networking platform for businesspeople and professionals.

It boasts 100 million members and has earned a global reputation as an invaluable daily resource for a wide range of business-focused users. It is not a party.

LinkedIn has become the social network of choice for business-to-business marketers. All of its sales and marketing activity, however, must play out within the site’s well-crafted boundaries and standards of behavior, ensuring engagement, connection, and relevance to the individual user. That relevance, after all, is the whole reason users keep coming back to LinkedIn, and it’s the reason the network presents such a broad range of social media marketing opportunities for businesses of virtually all sizes and levels of development.
A basic LinkedIn membership is free, but the network also offers paid memberships that provide additional features nonpaying members don’t get. Most businesses that join LinkedIn for marketing purposes decide to opt for a premium membership package that permits occasional (as in a maximum of four times a year) messages to specific contacts who are out of their contact network and/or the ability to learn who has been viewing a given profile. (See the final sidebar of this chapter.) In addition, there are a number of paid advertising and promotional programs you can use to win visibility and market share on LinkedIn.

**The Social Platform for Business**

What you’re about to read is an oversimplification, one that is in many ways deeply unfair to the unique features of both sites. But the larger point it makes is so important to note: *LinkedIn is to business networking as Facebook is to social networking.*

To support this broad statement, here are a few parallels that might make it look slightly less of an oversimplification. First and foremost, you should know that LinkedIn is, like Facebook, all about
supporting an engaging, welcoming environment for its users so that they get a sense of place and belonging and community. This particular environment, unlike Facebook, just happens to have a permanent, non-negotiable business focus.

Second, LinkedIn, like Facebook, is well-designed, intuitive, and fairly easy to use—at least for the basic stuff—and that’s true even among people who start out unfamiliar with the site. LinkedIn, like Facebook, is user friendly.

Third, you should know that, just like Facebook, LinkedIn has now reached a point where most businesspeople you meet are either already using it, or are familiar with it from a distance, or are resigned to the fact that they are probably going to have to learn how to use it at some point. You can say the same thing about Facebook as it relates to … well, pretty much everybody with access to the Internet. In other words, LinkedIn has penetrated its target market quite well. In the business sphere, it has picked up a level of dominance and name recognition that makes it pretty much unavoidable.

Fourth—and perhaps most important for users hoping to ramp up revenue relatively quickly—LinkedIn, like Facebook, can put to in touch (or
back in touch) with a wealth of people who just happen to be individuals you know or who know you. Indeed, connecting with past colleagues in a business context is a prime motivation for people to sign up for a free LinkedIn account, in much the same way that tracking down old friends, relatives, school buddies, and teachers is a prime motivation for people to sign up for a new Facebook account.

There are a couple of ways that LinkedIn differs dramatically from Facebook, which will be covered later in the chapter. For now, though, look more closely at the four commonalities:

- Community environment; sense of belonging
- Easy to use, at least for the basics
- High market penetration/name recognition factor for global audience
- Lots of people you know are already on the site

Put all four of those four elements together, roll them around in your mind a bit, and you will realize the huge potential for LinkedIn to deliver revenue-producing relationships to your
organization. Notice that, in stark contrast to Facebook, the main reason people are logging on to LinkedIn isn’t to reconnect with loved ones, or play games, or learn what old friends are up to. The reason they are logging on to LinkedIn is to do business.

**The B-to-B Game Changer**

Think for a moment about how that motivation—finding and engaging with business allies—could apply to your world. Those business allies you connect with could be vendors. They could also be customers, prospective clients, new employees, or people who are willing to say nice things about what a pleasure it was to work with your company. The game-changing factor, however, is that every single one of those prospective business allies not only represents a potential source of hard- or soft-dollar value to your enterprise, but each also represents a potential referral to *someone else* who represents hard- or soft-dollar value. There’s an exponential, and expanding, series of opportunities to connect, add value, and receive value in return.
At the end of the day, that’s what you and everyone else, including prospective buyers of your product or service, are looking for on LinkedIn! When you look at the site this way, you realize that it’s really no surprise that so many sales and marketing departments use the site as a primary lead generation source. Following is an actual case study about lead generation, before you learn how to use the site, so you can see just how important this network can be to your business’s marketing plan and why investing a few hours of your time to set it up is definitely worthwhile.

Get the Value You Need

Hard-dollar value is revenue coming into your organization. Soft-dollar value is something that makes it easier for you to win hard dollars, such as endorsements, greater visibility, or improved brand image. LinkedIn can help you generate both.

CASE STUDY
Evalueserve (www.evalueserve.com) provides customized market research, intellectual property research, and legal support services to a global client base that includes investment banks, retail banks, and insurance companies. By getting its sales team to use LinkedIn as a lead generation source, the company won direct access to hundreds of C-level decision-makers they could otherwise never have reached—at least not without navigating the potentially treacherous waters of working through a secretary or assistant with whom they had no previous relationship. The company’s sales team was also able to glean critical background information about specific individual LinkedIn users before reaching out to them, an essential qualifying step that made it easier to identify the right decision-makers and influencers within a given prospect’s organization. The result: a “notable increase of sales leads” and the decision to make LinkedIn an “intrinsic part of Evalueserve’s sales and marketing strategy.” Key takeaways from the company’s experience in using LinkedIn to generate leads included the following:
• “Using LinkedIn, one gets to know the focus of the profile being contacted, and can customize the pitch accordingly to garner maximum interest. This helps us in reaching the right audience, saving a lot of time and improving our success rate.”

• “An effective keyword search can be used to reach out to the right people. A useful tip for lead generation is to check the list of people who have viewed our profile; this lets us know who is interested in the company, and the prospects thereafter are more than ‘cold calls.’” (NOTE: This is why it is worth any sales and marketing team’s investment to buy a premium LinkedIn membership. Free memberships do not allow you to learn which of LinkedIn’s 100 million members has been searching your profile)

• “A key challenge was to ensure the confidentiality of our (existing) clients (during communications on LinkedIn) ... a social media section was added to the global media communication manual (for our employees), and an e-learning
The Second No-Brainer

You’ve just read a case study illustrating the first of two favorite bottom-line-boosting applications of LinkedIn: as a phenomenal selling tool. It allows you to identify people and companies who are looking at your profile, do an end run around gatekeepers, identify the right decision-maker, and reach out with a warm call rather than a cold call. That’s a dream come true for most salespeople. That use of LinkedIn is the first no-brainer because, frankly, any sales team worthy of the name that isn’t using the site in this way nowadays deserves to have its selling license revoked. Rest assured that your most important competitors are (or soon will be) using the site for lead generation. So you know what? You should be, too.

But what’s the second no-brainer? It’s not only simpler than the tactic you just read about, it’s also
cheaper because it doesn’t even require a premium membership of any kind. It’s still strongly recommend that you purchase the premium membership, but this next idea is something you can and should do if you happen to have zero dollars in your bank account, and that’s always worth knowing about.

Once you log on for the first time and set up your profile (something the site makes relatively painless), LinkedIn will offer you the opportunity to import contacts from your e-mail account so you can send them a message asking them to connect with you on the site. Take LinkedIn up on this offer, but make sure that you personally scrutinize each and every e-mail address that LinkedIn sends invitations to. This is very important, for reasons that will become clear in a moment.

LinkedIn provides several ways to import your contacts from a range of e-mail programs, both from the Web (Gmail, Hotmail) and from your desktop (Outlook). No one is automatically added to your LinkedIn contact list, which is called My Connections. On this network, members have to agree to join. In fact, they have to accept an Invitation. LinkedIn instructs you to send Invitations
only to people you know and trust—for instance, people you work with, you’ve been to school with, or hired.

Selectivity Is Key

Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to suck up every e-mail address on your system so you can send Invitations to random strangers whose e-mail address you happen to possess. Select only contacts you could actually call up on the phone, leave a message for, and then receive a call back within forty-eight to seventy-two hours.

Once the e-mail importing process is complete, you will probably want to take a break of a day or so to give people a chance to read the e-mail messages and respond. Once you log back on again, you will probably have—miracle of miracles—a fairly substantial list of people who have accepted your invitation to connect. By doing this, they are simply acknowledging their existing or past connection to you. These real-world, or first-degree, connections between two people who really and truly do know
each other are the foundation of the entire LinkedIn network.

Don’t worry if your base of first-level contacts is small at first. It’s incredibly easy to expand using LinkedIn’s Search feature. Select “people,” and then start typing in names of other people you actually know … or knew. The list of possibilities for new first-level contacts is downright awe inspiring: your current boss, your former boss, all your current colleagues, everyone you ever went to college with, everyone you ever worked for or with … you get the idea. Follow the prompts and send out as many legitimate requests as you possibly can. The idea, of course, is to grow your (real, not fake) network of contacts to as large a size as you possibly can. Expanding your list of contacts is an ongoing task, of course, but it is good to give yourself as big a base of people at the outset as you can realistically manage.

In fact, growing and maintaining this list is the basis of just about everything else you will be doing on LinkedIn. Read on to find out why your list of first-degree contacts is so important and to learn more about how you and your organization can start to benefit from that network.
What’s All This about Degrees?

A little earlier there was a discussion about the four things that LinkedIn had in common with Facebook. Now it’s time to look at some of dynamics that are very different between the two sites. Most of those dynamics connect to *one critical thing* that is very different indeed: the concept of levels.

Your list of Facebook friends might contain your mom and dad, your brother-in-law, your high-school sweetheart, and so on. These are all people who, in the real world, would at least recognize your name and would probably return your call within forty-eight hours if you left them a voicemail message.

The point is, your list of Facebook friends not only contains people you know well, like your mom and your dad and your brother-in-law, but it also, in all likelihood, contains people you hardly know at all and might not consider friends in any other arena than Facebook. These are people who definitely *wouldn’t* recognize your name or return your phone call—like, say, your brother-in-law’s next-door neighbor. The big thing you have to remember is that even though the social environment on
Facebook can be pretty free-wheeling when it comes to friending other people, the social environment on LinkedIn is quite different.

All those people who are now on your LinkedIn connections list are known as first-degree connections for a reason. These are the people you actually know and trust. The contacts on their lists are your second-degree connections—they’re two people away. A third-degree connection is three people away, and so on. (The profile summaries are marked “2nd,” “3rd,” and so forth to show your connection to them.)

So, unlike Facebook, if you decide you’d like to add a second-degree connection to your own list, you’ll need to ask for an Introduction from a mutual contact. Start by finding the LinkedIn profile of the person you’d like to meet. Hover your cursor over the profile, and if they’re available for it, a “Get introduced” link will appear on the right. Click on that link and you’ll be sent to a form requesting the introduction. (This only works with second- or third-degree connections.)

LinkedIn members are free to introduce any people on their contact lists to each other, but they’re not required to. An introduction expires after six
months, and the number of introductions you’re allowed depends on your service level.

**Status Updates**

Your LinkedIn home page includes a status update window that’s very similar to what you see on Facebook. This optional feature allows you to post a status update, which LinkedIn says is driven by the question, “What are you working on?” (On Facebook, it’s the answer to the question, “What’s on your mind?”)

You can choose how many people see your status updates. LinkedIn allows you to make your status visible to your Connections, to larger networks in which you operate on the site, or to everyone who visits your public profile. Companies using LinkedIn for marketing purposes tend to choose the third option.

If you allow your connections to see your updates, the updates are posted on their home pages under Network Activity. Those connections may then comment on your status.
The Three-Legged Stool

Your presence on LinkedIn is supported by a three-legged stool: your profile, your connections, and your recommendations. Ignore any one of these for any length of time, and you will find that your marketing efforts fall flat.

Your Profile

On LinkedIn more than anywhere else on the social web, you are marketing yourself on a professional level. Consequently, your profile is your most important marketing tool. Don’t think of your profile as a resume, but rather as a professional biography in which you throw a spotlight on your expertise, credentials, and accomplishments, and connect all of that to your organization. It might help to think of your presence on LinkedIn as expressed through your profile as a kind of ongoing job interview.

One of the most common pieces of advice you’ll hear for making the most of your LinkedIn membership is to fill out your profile completely. This is good advice. You want to include your work history, of course, but don’t neglect your educational history, either. Listing the schools you’ve attended
increases your visibility and gives LinkedIn a more complete set of criteria for recommending connections. It also makes it more likely that forgotten alumni from whatever school or schools you’ve studied at will reach out to you and ask to connect.

Of course, your profile shouldn’t include anything you wouldn’t want the people you work with to see. No profanity, no overt employment overtures if you’re working full time and want to keep it that way, no jokes you wouldn’t tell a prospect or customer. Or, better yet, no jokes at all. (By the way, another interesting thing you’ll notice that’s different about LinkedIn is that its most effective profiles are virtually humor free.)

Whatever you do, don’t pad anything—in other words, don’t lie. A lot of people are going to see this thing, and your chances of getting caught—and embarrassed—are quite high.

Your LinkedIn profile is your self on the network; don’t let it get ragged and dated. Visit it often, review it, and keep it current. Make sure it highlights your experience and expertise in a way that’s currently relevant to your professional goals.
Make sure you’ve posted a current photo. And check and double-check it for accuracy.

**Your Connections**

The first-degree connections between you and the people you actually know are what will make this network really sing for you and your organization. It is definitely in your best interest to make regular (say, weekly) efforts to update and expand this list regularly—appropriately, of course.

To do that, you will want to let other people know how they should connect with you. At the very bottom of your Edit Profile page you’ll find Contact Settings. This is where you let people know how you want to be contacted (by introductions, InMail, OpenLink, by e-mail, phone) and what you’re willing to be contacted about, which LinkedIn calls “Opportunity Preferences.” These include career opportunities, expertise requests, consulting offers, business deals, new ventures, personal reference requests, job inquiries, requests to reconnect. There’s even a place for you to add a note on the subject.
Your Recommendations

One big reason you want to populate your connections list with people who know you and your work well is that you want them to recommend you and your organization.

The Recommendations feature is one of the easiest and most obvious LinkedIn tools for promoting your business, and yet it’s criminally underused. Just log on to the network and look at the profiles of the people in your connections list. You’ll be stunned at how many have only a few recommendations—or even none!

LinkedIn recommendations are exactly what they sound like: comments written by other members in which they sing your praises. The recommendations you receive are visible to members within your network but also to Fortune 500 companies that use the LinkedIn Recruiter corporate tool. According to LinkedIn, members with recommendations from coworkers, colleagues, customers, clients, business partners, and former employers “are three times more likely to receive relevant offers and inquiries.”

A healthy list of recommendations is a key component of a complete LinkedIn profile. It makes
you and your business look good and adds stature and credibility to your personal brand. Be sure to make the most of this feature. Ask your best customers to write recommendations for you and your business!

**Groups**

LinkedIn’s Groups feature provides members with a great way to identify other members with similar interests and needs. Think of them as networks within the network. Groups also presents an opportunity to build your personal brand, to demonstrate your expertise, and to establish yourself among your connections as an expert resource on specific topics.

Joining a group is easy: Click on the Groups tab on your home page. On the drop-down menu, click on Groups Directory to go to that page. The Groups Directory page lists all the groups on LinkedIn that are open for membership, but you only see a set of featured groups. To find a group associated with a topic or a company that interests you, type a keyword into the search box.

You’ll have a lot of groups to choose from. Entering the key word “startups” yielded 824 groups.
Entering “high tech” produced 688 groups. “Social media” produced 5,291 groups!

You can refine your search by selecting a category. Adding “Nonprofit Group” to a search on “social media” knocked the list down to 159. Along with “Nonprofit,” the LinkedIn Group categories list includes Alumni, Corporate, Conference, Networking, Professional, and Other.

You can access a list of the groups to which you belong in the Groups drop-down menu. After you’ve built your profile and been active on the network for a while, try the “Groups You May Like” option to open up a list of groups LinkedIn thinks might be in relevant to you.

Groups allows you to quickly discover the most popular discussions in your professional groups, have an active part in determining the top discussions by liking and commenting, and follow the most influential people in your groups by checking the Top Influencers board or clicking their profile image to see all their group activity, among other things.
Another advantage of joining a group: It dramatically expands your reach beyond your first-degree connections.

**Choosing and Participating in a Group**

Sharing consistently in a group is one way to build your reputation and your organization’s brand. LinkedIn allows its members to join as many as fifty groups, but unless you’ve assigned a fleet of people in your company to help you and your enterprise take part in this kind of thing, you will probably find that your company can’t contribute meaningfully to that many. Your reputation will be better served if you use LinkedIn Groups to define an area of focus and then build your organization’s influence within a few groups, say three to five. To be effective, you’ll need to visit each group several times a week. The more people you have on your list of first-degree contacts, the more respect you are likely to win in these groups!

You have a lot of groups to choose from on LinkedIn, even within your industry or area of interest/expertise, but you can narrow things down even more by focusing on membership numbers. Rule of thumb: avoid the tiny and the massive. If a
group is too small, you won’t get much exposure; if it’s too big, you’ll be lost in the crowd. Ideally, you’ll want to join a group with at least a few hundred members but no more than a couple thousand.

You participate in LinkedIn Groups by joining discussions. The currently active conversational threads are listed on the group’s main page. You just click on the one that appeals to you and add a comment.

These conversations get rated: the most popular discussions get the most visibility and rise to the top of the group’s main page. If you want brand exposure, this is where you’ll get it.

Make It Count

Don’t jump in unprepared to group discussions on LinkedIn. Review the conversational thread and get up to speed before adding your two cents. Be sure you have something to contribute—maybe a thought-provoking question—and employ all the posting practices you’ve learned elsewhere in this
book. It’s okay to lurk for a while, but remember, you’re there to take part in good conversations that get your company, and its products and services, noticed.

At some point—probably after you’ve been a member of the group for a while and participated in a few discussions—you’ll want to start a conversation of your own. Fortunately, that’s easy: just type a question or a statement into the box by your profile picture, and you’re off! Remember, though, that your goal is to encourage engagement. Take some time to peruse (make that study) the group’s most popular discussions. What was discussed? What seemed to get everyone’s attention? What mattered to them? Once you start getting to know the group’s dynamics, pitch in with your own appropriate insights and suggestions!

**Creating a Group**

LinkedIn makes it easy to create your own group, but before you start, you’ll want to do a little preparation. First, decide on a name for your group and pick a group category. Provide your logo in a
PNG, JPEG, or GIF file, no larger than 100 KB, and know where it’s stored on your hard drive. Write up a short description of the purpose of your group, which LinkedIn calls a “Group Summary.” That description will appear in the Groups Directory, so give it some thought.

Now write up a longer description for your group’s pages. It doesn’t have to be longer, actually, and it could even be the same thing as your summary. But if you want to elaborate, LinkedIn gives you a place to do it.

You’ll also want to decide in advance whether you want your group to be open to any LinkedIn member without your approval or whether you’d prefer that members have to ask first. The default is “Request to Join,” and for your first group, you should stick with that.

If your group is associated with a website, have that address ready. You’ll also need to decide whether you want to designate a physical location for your group—the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, or Greater Topeka.

When you have all of that ready to go, click on the Groups tab on your home page and select “Create a
Group” to open the Create a Group page. Now all you have to do is fill in the boxes and click the Create Group button.

Keep in mind that your group should be about your industry, not your company. Or maybe your craft or your profession, but not your luthier shop or your law practice. Successful LinkedIn Groups are ad-free environments where people can talk shop.

If you don’t have a webpage associated with your group, you might consider building one. Webpages aren’t free, but they’re cheap these days. But don’t do this right away. Wait until you get the hang of being a group owner before you add to your platform.

Also, your group needs a logo. It doesn’t have to be fancy or expensive—simple probably is better—but you have to have one. The web is exploding with free graphics these days, so this doesn’t have to break the bank. Make sure it’s clean, simple, and professional looking. If you decide later that you hate it, you can always change it.

One sound marketing justification for a nice logo: It serves as a badge that members can allow you to display on their profiles. (Be sure to ask.)
Creating your own group can be a useful marketing strategy, but you really have to commit to it. If you create a group, you own it and you have to manage it. You’ll have to attend to your administrator duties daily, maybe more often, depending on how large and active your group is. Fortunately, LinkedIn provides group owners with a set of onboard management tools.

One of the best ways to attract members to your LinkedIn Group is also one of the easiest: invite your LinkedIn connections to join. Then spread the word via Twitter, Facebook, and any other social media platforms you participate in.

**Cool Tools and Applications**

Like Facebook, LinkedIn partners with third-party application providers to add functionality to the network. The applications in the app catalog are free and provide many useful opportunities to enhance your professional marketing efforts. Here are some particularly effective ones.
Polls

This application is designed to allow you to query your LinkedIn network and, as the vendor puts it, “leverage the wisdom of millions of business professionals on LinkedIn.” The app distributes your question to your connections and millions of other professionals on LinkedIn. There’s also a feature that allows you to share your poll through the vendor’s Facebook and Twitter integrations, and you can embed a voting module on your own website or blog.

Company Buzz

The network’s own application, Company Buzz is designed to allow LinkedIn users to tune in to the latest Twitter buzz about specific topics and companies. You can tune the app to find relevant trends and comments about you and your organization or company. You can modify topics and add new ones, drill down into trends, and track history buzz data.

Google Presentation

This application allows you to show a PowerPoint presentation or one created with Google Docs using
your LinkedIn profile. You can use the free application to add another dynamic content layer by showing a recent talk or presentation or displaying a visual portfolio of your professional accomplishments.

**Events**

Another home-grown app from LinkedIn, Events keeps you in the know about conferences, seminars, webcasts, classes, and other events related to your business or profession. It does this by tracking the events that your entire professional network is attending. This application is particularly useful for salespeople, because it can give you a heads-up so that you can set up meetings with prospects who are going to be in town for a conference. The app displays the details of each event, as well as comments about events from your connections. This is a great resource for promoting events at which you are presenting or participating as an exhibitor.

**Creative Portfolio Display**

This is another application for displaying images and graphical materials. The emphasis here is on creative visual work that’s tough to do justice to
with text. Once installed, the application uploads your portfolio to the Behance Network, which is a free online platform for creative professionals. The system allows you to create an unlimited number of multimedia projects, and you can select which projects are displayed on your LinkedIn profile.

**Blog Link**

As the name implies, Blog Link allows you to connect your blog to your LinkedIn profile. This is a great way to expand the range of your LinkedIn connections and use that resource to build your brand. The application can also automatically pull in the latest blog posts from around your network. It’s a good way to add relevant, dynamic content to your profile.

**Box.net**

This is a third-party file management and sharing tool for LinkedIn. It allows you to quickly and easily add virtually any type of file to your LinkedIn profile, so visitors can download and view them. In addition to providing free storage and collaboration features, Box.net allows you to feature key documents directly on your profile.
In January 2011, LinkedIn introduced a new application for visualizing your network connections. Dubbed InMaps, the app displays an interactive visual representation of your professional universe. This is a very cool tool that provides a dramatic picture of your professional network. It’s just a better way to display your connections and relationships. The map is color coded to represent different affiliations or groups from your professional career (previous employer, college classmates, industries you’ve worked in).

Marketing on LinkedIn: Try This

What can you do right now to market your business on LinkedIn? Consider the following ideas.

FIVE LOW- OR NO-COST STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING WITH LINKEDIN

1. Twitter Link

LinkedIn is now integrated with the Twitter microblogging service—which means you can send a tweet from your Twitter home page to update prospects and customers on Twitter about what
you’re doing on LinkedIn. It’s an easy way to double your exposure—and your impact! You link the two accounts from the Edit Profile page. Just click on “Add Twitter account” and follow the prompts. Once you’ve linked the two accounts, a Twitter icon will appear next to the status update box. Now you simply enter your 140-character message and click the icon, and it will appear in your Twitter stream. The link between the two accounts also allows you to update your LinkedIn status through Twitter. One particularly effective strategy is to ask current customers who are following you on Twitter to share their experiences with you there, and then ask if they will let you turn the resulting tweet into a recommendation on LinkedIn. This may mean helping them to set up a LinkedIn account, but it also means getting a great recommendation and a new connection. Recommendations carry major weight with prospective buyers!

2. Write a recommendation first

Don’t wait to be asked. Don’t ask for one in return. Just write a great, heartfelt, reality-based recommendation for a prospect, customer, or connection whose relationship matters to you. Do it
out of the blue. Make a habit of this, and you will not only generate more new sales leads but also generate more reciprocal recommendations.

3. Ask for an introduction

This is one of the big benefits of building up your base of first-degree contacts: You can, and should, ask first-degree contacts for an introduction to likely prospects who currently show up as second-degree contacts.

4. Ask to connect

After your second or third good voice-to-voice conversation with a prospect or customer, ask whether you can connect with him or her on LinkedIn. Most people who use the site will say yes. This is a great way to stay on the person’s radar screen for future first-time business, repeat business, or referrals.

5. Update your profile regularly to spotlight new products and services

It might seem obvious, but very few people actually do it. For a reality check on how important this is, Google the names of twenty people you know to be
on LinkedIn, and watch how often their profile comes up as the first page listed.

THREE OTHER AFFORDABLE STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING WITH LINKEDIN

The LinkedIn free account has lots of features, but if you’re willing to spend a little money, you can get even more. LinkedIn’s premium services, which can be accessed by clicking “Upgrade Your Account” at the bottom right of your home page, are bundled into three account levels: Business, Business Plus, and Executive. Pricing ranges between $25 and $100 per month. Each provides some level of access to InMail, deeper search capacity, a Who’s Viewed My Profile feature, a Premium Badge, and the OpenLink Network, among other goodies

1. InMail

Like Facebook, LinkedIn provides its members with a range of onboard tools to add value to their basic profile. One of the best of these is InMail, which is a messaging service that is just what it sounds like: e-mail within the LinkedIn network. The system allows you (for a fee; see sidebar) to reach out to any LinkedIn member with a message. You don’t need anything but that member’s name, and that
member gets to see your profile before deciding whether or not to answer. You have to pay a fee to use the InMail system, and you can only send members a certain number of messages per year, but LinkedIn promises to give you a freebie if you don’t get a response within seven days. LinkedIn claims that InMail has a much higher response rate than cold calls or e-mail; online testimonials suggest that this is in fact the case, with some companies reporting open rates of between 20 and 40 percent, virtually unheard of for blind e-mails.

2. OpenLink Network

If you pay for the Business Plus or Business Pro premium accounts, you have access to the OpenLink Network. This network-within-a-network provides an additional level of access to LinkedIn members interested in meeting new people. Essentially, it allows unlimited direct contacts, via OpenLink messages, to anyone else with the service. OpenLink (optional) increases your chances of finding opportunities by allowing anyone on LinkedIn to send you a message free without seeing your contact info.

3. Try a targeted advertising/promotional campaign
LinkedIn offers a number of intriguing options here, including Company Pages, Custom Groups, Sponsorships, White Paper Distribution, and Partner Messages, which are basically souped-up InMail messages that link to a cobranded landing page. To learn more about these marketing tools, visit www.marketing.linkedin.com.

CASE STUDY

Data and voice communications giant Qwest (www.qwest.net) created a LinkedIn Custom Group, SMB IT Connections, to reach a critical group of prospects: IT professionals working for small and medium-sized businesses. Qwest promoted the group through a special Company Page, targeted display advertising, and Partner Messages. The company secured an astonishing 18 percent open rate on membership invitations; quickly built a 1,400-member community of highly qualified, highly engaged decision-makers; and created new alliances and communication channels within a critical target group. A representative display ad read: “Talk IT with fellow business leaders. Solve
problems, share ideas, and get ideas at the Qwest SMB IT Connection Group.” That’s marketing by conversation!

The Most Important Thing to Remember about LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a special place with a special code of behavior, and a big part of the reason it has succeeded is that it sets and enforces clear standards. It is less tolerant of errors rooted in inexperience or opportunism than many other social networking sites. The best piece of advice to pass along for marketers eager to capitalize on the potential of a campaign involving this site is to learn the rules and play by them.

That’s an essential first principle for any social media platform, of course, but it’s particularly important in LinkedIn’s case, given the premium its users place on online privacy, confidentiality within business relationships, and the ability to focus only on topics of their own choosing. If you are new to the site, you should probably consider finding a
friend who’s been using LinkedIn for a while and is active on it. Ask whether you can make this person your very first connection, and adopt him or her as a mentor.
Chapter 7

Tools of the Trade

How are you supposed to keep track of all your social media marketing endeavors? Fortunately, there are some great third-party social media management tools available that can make the process of social media marketing much less unwieldy. This chapter will look at some of them.

Social Media Dashboards

Techies call it a “client,” but it’s more useful to think of the desktop application that pulls tweets and status updates from your various social media accounts and displays them together in a single interface as a social media dashboard. Tools like TweetDeck, Seesmic, sobees, and HootSuite are indispensible for individuals and small businesses that need to monitor more than one social media community. They can simplify your social media
life dramatically and make you a more effective social media marketer.

**TweetDeck**

Don’t imagine it’s just for Twitter. TweetDeck is an Adobe AIR-based desktop client that aggregates messages from Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Google Buzz, and other social media. Along with the desktop client, there are versions for a number of smartphones and one for Apple’s iPad tablet PC.

TweetDeck presents users with an organized dashboard display of the tweets and status updates you’re following. You can compose messages from this dashboard for any of these social media services. The application can be set to automatically update, and it recognizes your groups and lists. It supports multiple Twitter accounts (very useful if you’re managing both a personal and professional Twitter presence), and it allows you to sort and resort your messages in a number of ways, including direct messages and mentions. Easily the best of the bunch and the top recommendation.
Seesmic

Another popular social media client, Seesmic is available as a desktop application, a mobile app, and a browser-based tool. Seesmic is an app, billed as “a powerful collection of social management tools that provide businesses and individuals with everything they need to build their brand online.”

Seesmic also provides a dashboard display for organizing your tweets and status updates. You can compose messages from this dashboard, too, and the app can be set to automatically update. In addition to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, Seesmic is integrated with what might be the widest range of social and online media, including Salesforce Chatter, Ning, Formspring, Klout, Yammer, Google Reader, Zendesk, Gowalla, and eBay.

sobees

This social media client app comes in desktop and browser versions, as well as iPad and Android apps for tablets. It aggregates content from Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn in a dashboard that looks a lot like TweetDeck, with multiple columns and rows. Sobees also provides the user
with desktop access to his/her Facebook profile, home page, inbox, and friends list.

This one is a native Windows program, so it’s fast on a PC, but the vendor claims that it works equally well on a Mac. The browser version is Silverlight-based. The interface is a little bit jazzier thanks to drop shadows, animations, and transparencies.

**HootSuite**

One of the newest social media dashboards, HootSuite is a cloud-based service. You access the dashboard from a web browser. HootSuite integrates updates from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, WordPress, Ping.fm, MySpace, and foursquare in a tab-based interface. Users can publish messages and monitor conversations across multiple sites. There are versions of the app for iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, and Android.

HootSuite is available in free and fee-based versions. The free version, which is supported by advertising, provides users with access to five social networks and two RSS/Atom feeds. For $6 a month, you can add access for one extra team member.
Additional team members can be added starting at $15 per month.

HootSuite adds a team element to social media marketing. Teams can use the dashboard to schedule updates to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn collaboratively.

The paid version offers a standout feature of this social media dashboard: detailed statistics on your Twitter accounts, including things like the number of clicks per day on your Twitter accounts, referring websites, and statistics on individual tweets. This is a great feature for businesses and individuals who want to track social media stats and rapidly adjust their approaches.

**Other Cool Tools**

**Ping.fm**

This is a free service for updating multiple social media accounts. And in this case, “multiple” means (if you want) nearly forty—among them Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Ping.fm groups services into three categories: status updates, blogs, and microblogs. Updates can be sent to each group.
separately. Mobile versions of Ping.fm are available for the iPhone, iPod, and a number of smart phones.

**Radian6**

Radian6 is a good example of a social media monitoring system that listens to the social web. The idea is to keep track of what’s being said about you and/or your company, so that you can better engage in social media conversations. Radian6’s desktop application, which it calls an Engagement Console, tracks mentions over 150 million social media sites and sources. As the company puts it, users can “explore real-time results on an interactive dashboard that provides meaningful and actionable insights for their business.”

**Swix**

Swix ([www.swixhq.com](http://www.swixhq.com)) is a social media analytics application aimed at social marketers. Swix monitors all of your activities on social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and more than twenty others. Each day, Swix gathers visitor and usage data for your sites, graphs it all over time, and puts everything in one convenient place for you.
Social Mention

Social Mention is a social media search and analysis platform designed to aggregate user generated content from across the social Web into a single stream of information. It allows users to track and measure what people are saying about them, their companies, their products—just about any topic across the social web. Social Mention monitors over 100 social media sites directly, including Twitter, Facebook, FriendFeed, YouTube, Digg, Google, and others.

Sysomos

Sysomos is another example of a social media monitoring service but one that adds business intelligence (BI) to the process. The service redefines social media analytics by adding the BI component and by providing users with tools, not only to listen, but to measure and understand what’s being talked about, as well as to participate in conversations and engage with key influencers.
Chapter 8

Other Social Media Services to Consider

As noted earlier in the book, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn aren’t the only social media services out there. They’re not even the only types of social media. Once you have your initial marketing program in place, you might find it useful to experiment with an opinion-sharing site, a photo-sharing site, or a social-bookmarking site. You might also want to investigate other social networks. If you find you have a more youth-oriented target audience, MySpace might be a good supplement to Facebook. If you’re trying to appeal to the multifaceted African American market, you will want to take a look at BlackPlanet. If you’re looking to network in the United Kingdom or New Zealand, Bebo might be a better bet. If you’re interested in the Pacific Rim, good old Friendster is probably a must.
Also, be sure to consider community-specific and niche social networks, such as Classroom 2.0 for K–12 educators and deviantART for art lovers. YouTube, for that matter, is an extremely powerful platform if you’ve got videos to share.

**Beyond Facebook: Mainstream Social Networks You Should Get to Know**

Facebook gets so much of the social media press—even its own movie—that other social networks sort of fade into the background. None of these have the sheer membership numbers that Facebook commands (nobody does), but they are worth exploring.

**BlackPlanet**

This is the leading social networking site designed exclusively for African Americans. It’s a free service that allows members to create profiles, find members, search, upload photos and video, share music, send messages, chat, participate in forums, coordinate community events, and blog. Launched in 1999, it is one of the oldest social media sites and has gone through many reinventions, the latest of
which gave it Facebook-style status updates and games.

Nearly 90 percent of its user base identifies as black or African American; two-thirds of users are women. With a reported 20 million highly educated users (64 percent of whom attended or graduated an institution of higher learning), this site is indisputably among the most important in the social media space. It touches a wide array of African-American demographic groups, and supports an extremely vigorous, diverse online community. It is likely to retain its status as the largest black community online for some time.

**Google+**

As of this writing, this is the new kid on the block. The search engine and online advertising giant Google wields such immense influence, and is so pervasive in so many areas of modern life, that its priorities usually matter to the rest of the online world, and this particular new kid is clearly a very high priority indeed. Thanks to deep pockets, great research, innovative design, and huge built-in audiences, Google+ is already potentially a much more important player than many sites of longer
standing. The platform, as designed, is an extremely ambitious attempt to compete with Twitter and Facebook for the attention, community ties, and personal information of hundreds of millions of savvy web users. Even though its staggeringly large, fast-growing user base gives its rivals fits, Google+ is still working out some kinks. Stay tuned.

**MySpace**

MySpace was the first social network to grab the public’s attention in a big way, and with somewhere around 100 million members, it’s still a popular web destination. It’s also one of the richest social media environments in cyberspace. MySpace has distinguished itself with a dazzling array of features and content.

In 2010, MySpace introduced a new site design that more closely mirrored Facebook’s. But rather than competing with that network, managers of MySpace say they’re reclaiming the site’s roots as a music-oriented site aimed at younger people.

Music, videos, games, and even television programming have always been a big part of the MySpace experience. Music in particular is huge on MySpace, and the network has become the epicenter
of a thriving music scene. MySpacers can listen to millions of songs and create both public and private playlists.

Users can upload songs they own or buy them from MySpace Music, add them to their personal profiles, and play them on a pop-up music player module the network provides. Users can create and publish playlists and share them with friends. They can promote the music and artists they like through the iLike sidebar, a plugin for iTunes and Windows Media Player. They can even track concert schedules and buy tickets.

MySpace users can also record and upload their own videos to the network, and they do so at the startling rate of about 80,000-plus vids every twenty-four hours, according to the company.

Groups are extremely popular on MySpace. In fact, the network supports some 10,000 groups in twenty categories. The network includes, for example, nearly 50,000 groups in the Food, Drink & Wine category, nearly 25,000 in the Places & Travel category, and more than 90,000 groups in the Games category.
**Friendster**

Yes, good old Friendster is still alive and, contrary to popular belief, still kicking vigorously. One of the first of the modern social networks, Friendster was founded in 2002 and was reportedly the model for MySpace. Despite a reputation in the United States as a failed enterprise, it remains one of the world’s most popular social networking services, claiming a membership of around 100 million members. About 90 percent of its traffic now comes from Southeast Asia, but some web watchers believe the service is poised for an American comeback.

According to the web traffic watchers at Alexa, the United States currently accounts for less than 10 percent of Friendster’s visitors. Almost a third of its visitors live in the Philippines, about 15 percent live in Indonesia, India and Malaysia account for about 5 percent each, nearly 4 percent live in South Korea, nearly 3 percent live in Japan, and China and Singapore each account for just over 2 percent.

Friendster got a facelift in 2009, when it was acquired by a Malaysian company called MOL Global. The new Friendster emphasizes customization features: Every user can select his or her own home and profile page color scheme.
There’s also a Friendster skins directory in which you can choose from among forty layout themes and templates. You can upload your own images, designs, and colors. Friendster also simplified the site’s other pages, including the “friends,” “messages,” “comments,” “photo browsing,” and “photo uploading” pages.

In 2010, Friendster formed a strategic partnership with the Southeast Asian branch of Yahoo! to integrate product features from that Internet services company with the social network. The deal put a Friendster app on the Yahoo! website, promotional placements for Yahoo! products on Friendster, enhanced search results for Friendster user profiles and Friendster Fan Profiles within Yahoo! Search, and created an ability of Friendsters to link their accounts on the social network with their Yahoo! accounts.

**Bebo**

The Bebo social network claims 121 million registered users, more than 50 million of whom have visited the site in the past year. The site is accessible in multiple languages, but it’s most popular in English-speaking countries outside of the United
States, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. It also has a large English-speaking base in Israel.

Bebo claims to attract a younger user base, about 75 percent of whom are between ages sixteen and twenty-four.

Formerly owned by AOL, Bebo was acquired in 2010 by Criterion Capital Partners. The new CEO, Adam Levin, says the site doesn’t compete with Facebook but complements it and other social media services. The network provides a Lifestream Platform designed to deliver real-time, chronological updates from friends—including updates from Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, and Delicious. The network is also integrated with Skype.

Customizability is one of Bebo’s key selling points. The social network allows members to create customized pages from more than 10,000 templates, called skins. The site also features “webisodics” online television series.

The company says that nearly 20 percent of its users log on to the site from their mobile devices.
**hi5**

Founded in 2003, this social network claims around 50 million active members, most of them in Latin America. Members create profiles, browse groups and categories by keyword, and search for other friends. Members can give each other virtual high-fives. It supports chat rooms and profile customization. In 2010, it launched a new game developer program.

**Badoo**

Founded in London in 2006, and now owned by a Greek company, this free multilingual social network is popular in Europe. It claims more than 50 million users. Members create profiles, chat, blog, and share photos. The network charges for a feature called “Rise Up,” which gives user profiles more prominence. It does not support groups, and some critics charge that it resembles a dating site more than a true social networking site.

**Other Business Networks**

LinkedIn, as you’ve seen, is the premier business/profession-oriented social network, but it’s not the
only one. There are actually dozens of networks that exist to provide what you might call a professional context for social networking. Here are a few to consider

**Xing**

Billed as the leading business network in Europe, this service claims more than 8 million members. Users develop resume-like profiles on personal home pages, as well as online business cards. They maintain their address books, send and receive messages, schedule appointments, and plan events. A “power search” feature includes intelligent search filters. Also supported are company profiles.

**Ryze**

This free business-focused social network was founded in 2001 and now claims a global membership of 500,000. It was one of the first networks designed specifically with business pros in mind, and it maintains a special focus on entrepreneurs. Members get a free home page and have access to specialized, industry-hosted subnetworks. The site features the usual social
networking features and offers additional capabilities with a paid membership.

**eBay Neighborhoods**

eBay is, of course, a very popular online marketplace that brings together a huge range of buyers and sellers. You often hear those folks described collectively as “the eBay community,” but eBay itself is not a social network. eBay’s Neighborhoods feature, however, which the company introduced in 2007, does fit the definition. The company bills it as a “place to connect with others who share the same passion for products and topics.” Check it out.

**Chatter**

Created by Salesforce.com, Chatter is billed as “Facebook for the enterprise.” This is actually an application and social development platform. Chatter aims to allow developers to bring Facebook- and Twitter-like capabilities to Salesforce’s Force.com enterprise cloud computing platform. Developers use Chatter to add social features, such as profiles, status updates, and real-time feeds, to any of the applications built on Force.com
Niche Social Networks

The social web is also home to social networking services aimed at specific groups. You won’t see membership in the billions, but these are focused potential markets, and that makes them well worth your attention.

Classroom 2.0

This is a popular social network created especially for K–12 educators, administrators, and those interested in social media in education. Classroom 2.0 is a free community-supported network that includes the usual social networking components, such as profiles and a central display of status updates. But it also provides its members with blogging tools, wikis, chat features, forums, and sponsored events. Classroom 2.0 supports a number of groups, including Elementary Math, Middle School Science, Elementary School 2.0, and Google Apps for Education, among others.

The Brainyard

The Brainyard was launched in 2011 as a new community site aimed at business leaders “who are redefining their organizations.” This network is all
about social enterprise tools and technologies. Focused on social and collaborative technologies, this network aims to provide execs who are “grappling with where, what, when, and how” to use social media in their organizations. It’s essentially a platform for companies to engage with business leaders focused on creating social enterprises.

**GDGT**

A social network platform focused on consumer technology, GDGT (pronounced “gadget”) is a billed as “a social gadget platform that enables you to connect with the community through your gadgets, and connect with your gadgets through the community.” The community is dedicated to providing its members with “useful, contextual information—both from here and around the web—to help you get more out of the products you already own, as well as help you discover that next great device to add to your collection.”

**YouTube**

This website is in a category all its own. The YouTube video-sharing site is just a few years old,
but it has already woven itself into the fabric of our mediacentric society. Rare is the newscast that doesn’t show a YouTube clip or two, late-night talk shows love the site’s postings, and there are even a handful of mainstream cable shows whose content is derived almost exclusively from them.

Alexa ranks YouTube among the top three most visited websites, behind only Google and Facebook. In 2009, comScore’s Video Metrix service found that 120.5 million viewers had watched nearly 10 billion videos on YouTube in August alone. YouTube, itself, claims that fifteen hours of video are uploaded to the site every minute.

YouTube is a powerful platform for promoting yourself, your products, or your project. Musicians and comedians post videos online to get their careers going. Performers and filmmakers post videos to promote their shows. Teachers give away free lessons online to encourage you to pay for more. Hobbyists post videos to share and demonstrate their expertise. And companies post videos to help their customers use their products.

It provides its members with channels, which are pages that display information they have decided to share with the public from their accounts, including
profiles, favorite videos, subscriptions, etc. Other members can subscribe to your channel. And you can post your YouTube activities automatically to your Twitter and Facebook accounts.

A highly interactive social service, YouTube users can comment on a video in the “Respond to this video” box displayed below the video window. Previous comments are listed below that box in reverse chronological order, as you might see in a blog.

YouTube offers a fee-based service for publicizing and promoting your videos and your channel, called YouTube Promoted Videos. The service connects your channel to Google’s AdWords. (Google owns YouTube.) YouTube describes the service as “an advertising solution that allows YouTube users, partners, and advertisers to promote their video content within the YouTube website.” YouTube also gives its members free access to some great performance statistics about their videos with a tool called YouTube Insight.

This is a reporting tool that tracks how popular your videos are, how often people view them, what types of people view them, which countries are generating the most traffic, and other statistics.
Other video-sharing sites to consider include Vimeo, Revver, and Blip.tv.

**Opinion and Review Sites**

The value to readers of the opinion and review communities is in their ability to provide readily accessible platforms for straight-from-the-street sources of opinions on products and services. Facebook users can get good feedback on the new summer blockbuster because a bunch of their friends will have seen it. But what if you want to learn about a particular riding mower or vacation cruise package and you can’t find friends who have recently made those purchases? The opinion and review sites essentially expand a user’s network for this one purpose.

These sites are valuable from a marketing standpoint because they provide another feedback source for companies monitoring consumer reactions to their products. For individuals, they provide a platform for expanding their reputations, and thus, their influence.

Opinion and review communities can focus on a single product category or cover virtually anything
you might want to buy or rent. They can draw from the experiences of customers living in a particular area or dip into the vast, worldwide pool of consumers. Each community provides its own set of rating tools and enforces its own set of rules.

**Yelp**

Yelp is probably the best known opinion and review community. The site claims to draw more than 26 million users per month, and it indexes more than 15 million small businesses, including companies that have not yet been reviewed by Yelp users. It has published more than 9 million reviews.

Business owners can set up free accounts on the site to post offers, photos, and messages to their customers. Paid content is labeled “Sponsored Results,” but advertisers who like a review can promote it by displaying it at the top of their Yelp page.

Yelp describes itself as “an online urban city guide that helps people find cool places to eat, shop, drink, relax and play,” all of which is based on “the informed opinions of a vibrant and active community of locals in the know.” In addition to
reviews, you can use Yelp to find events, special offers, lists, and to talk with other Yelpers.

**Epinions**

Another extremely popular general-interest consumer website, Epinions is owned by Shopping.com (which is owned by eBay). The service considers itself to be a platform for shared user experiences. More than thirty categories of reviewed products and services are listed on the site, comprising millions of items. Users who conduct product research on the site will often find links to price lists and online retailers.

Membership is free, and review writers must be members. The reviews themselves can be read by anyone with a web browser. Members can write reviews on any topic, and Epinions wants its reviewers to be “brutally honest … even if it means saying negative things.”

**TripAdvisor**

This consumer opinion site is, as its title suggests, travel focused. TripAdvisor calls itself “the most popular and largest travel community in the world” and claims more than 32 million unique monthly
visitors to its website. The community specializes in publishing consumer reviews of travel destinations and has published more than 30 million of them. The site also offers a pretty wide range of travel planning and assistance features.

Membership in the TripAdvisor community is free, and members provide most of the content. The site is going for a relaxed, neighborhood coffee shop feel—just a bunch of road warriors hanging out, comparing notes, and sharing bits of wisdom. But there’s not a member home page to speak of. Although the site lists air fares, hotel rates, restaurants, and vacation rentals, it’s not a reservation or booking service.

**Social Bookmarking**

Sharing the cool stuff you find on the web is one of the essential ways you add value as a member of a social network. You can and should do that on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. But you might also find it useful to participate directly on social bookmarking sites.

Social bookmarking adds a communal dimension to the basic act of bookmarking a webpage. Instead of
saving your favorites with your browser and storing them on your computer, you save them to a special-purpose website that allows you to organize them there and share them with friends, family, and total strangers.

Why do it as part of a social media marketing practice? Social bookmarking allows you to add value by sending members of your network to cool and useful websites, and it develops your reputation as someone to follow. You also have access to the favorites of other users, which gives you another way to tune into what’s hot and what’s not on the web.

Users of social bookmarking services do more than simply publish URLs. They describe the sites they’re bookmarking, comment on their content, and tag them with telling search terms. Other users effectively ratethose bookmarks by adding them to their own collections or leaving them out.

**Delicious**

Delicious is one of the most popular social bookmarking services. Anyone can visit the site and explore hotlists, tags, and the most popular bookmarks being saved by its registered members.
The bookmarks are displayed in a column on the main page as thumbnail images of the websites next to hyperlinked headlines. Clicking on the headline or the thumbnail opens the page directly. The number of people who have bookmarked each page is posted there, too, which indicates their popularity in specific numbers.

Delicious provides its members with several social networking features through Yahoo!. For example, users create a profile, but it’s done through Yahoo!. A Delicious/Yahoo! profile includes the usual personal information—name, city, birthday, photo. Users can post personal status updates in the “What are you doing now?” window. There are privacy settings, profile editing features, and a contact list. To get out of the profile page and back to Delicious, click the Back button or the My Delicious button if you installed it.

**Faves**

Faves is a bright and lively bookmark-sharing site with a big social component. Membership is free, and users set up profiles with viewer preferences and adjustable privacy settings. There’s also an
e-mail feature, which helps users to build friends lists.

The site emphasizes opinion sharing almost as much as bookmark sharing. A member bookmark is called a “fave,” but it isn’t complete without comments on the webpage from the users and other members, and tags. Users vote on bookmarks by clicking on up or down arrows in little “vote” boxes displayed next to each posted fave.

Faves connects its members though a unique Topic Network. Users select topics of interest from a list that includes Cars, Food, Movies, Technology, Shopping, Travel, Sports, and News, among others. Once you select your topics, your home page displays the latest and most popular bookmarks under that topic heading. Users can add and remove topics anytime. The Most Active Topic Groups are also displayed on the home page.

**Linkroll**

Linkroll bills itself as a “link blogging” service, which is a little confusing. But the site is very accessible and straightforward. Membership is free, but unlike some bookmark-sharing sites that allow
you to decide who sees your links, all bookmarks stored on Linkroll are public.

The site’s bookmarks are displayed on the main page as hyperlinked headlines with summaries, tags, and a link to a list of the poster’s other bookmarks. The bookmarks are accessible to nonmembers, but you must register to post links and access the site’s advanced subscribe and ignore features. All your bookmarks on the site are sortable and searchable by category and date.

The site provides users with “bookmarklets” for one-click bookmarking; the buttons are installed by a simple drag-and-drop over the browser toolbar. Bookmarked webpages must be categorized and commented on. Users can subscribe to categories and to links by user, “so you can track what links your friends are bookmarking.”

**Social News**

Social news sites provide a platform for news consumers to recommend and rate news stories, articles, images, blogs, and videos. A social news community member submits a story for consideration by the entire registered membership,
and whether it stays on the website, and how prominently it’s featured there, is largely up to that user community. In other words, the value of the content submitted to a social news site is determined collectively, usually through some kind of voting system.

Social news sites can focus on specific topic areas, such as politics, entertainment, or technology, or they can cover topics of general interest. Most social news sites require you to register before you can submit a story that you’d like to recommend and/or to vote on others, but the links to the stories themselves are usually displayed on a main page that’s accessible to all visitors. Many of these websites also allow (and even encourage) users to comment on the stories they submit, adding yet another layer of user-generated content to the web.

If you have any doubts about the impact of social news, consider this: Social news sites have spawned a phenomenon known as the Slashdot effect, or being “slashdotted,” but lately more widely referred to as the Digg effect. Slashdot is the venerable social news site focused on science and technology stories; Digg is the popular general-interest social news site. Both have been responsible for huge spikes in web
traffic to the sites featuring the stories their users recommend. This is no big deal if you’re the *Washington Post*, but if something you wrote on your personal blog captures the attention of the masses, your home server or even a shared-hosting service could very well be overwhelmed by your sudden popularity.

**Digg**

One of the web’s most popular social news communities, Digg claimed to support more than 40 million users in 2010. And the web traffic watchers at Alexa have ranked the Digg website among the world’s 100 busiest.

Digg is a general-interest social news site. The content recommended by its members covers a range of topics, including politics, entertainment, technology, and general news. Members can recommend different types of content, including text-based news items and blogs, but also images and videos.

**Slashdot**

The granddaddy of social news communities is Slashdot, which has been around since 1997. Owned
by Geeknet Inc., the site bills itself as “News for Nerds,” and that’s a fair description in the friendliest sense of those words. The site features user-submitted summaries of stories on a range of technology topics—everything from Linux and open source software to book reviews, general science and technology to Apple products. Each summary includes a link to the original source of the story.

The top story summaries are displayed on the home page, and they’re collected under Upcoming, Recent, and Popular categories. The home page also features links to subsections that include original Slashdot content. Clicking on “Ask Slashdot,” for example, takes you to a page of advice offered by Slashdot community members on things like jobs, computer hardware, software glitches, and philosophical problems. Clicking on “Book Reviews” takes you to a section where you can read—and write—original reviews of mostly (but not necessarily, as the website puts it) tech books.

**Mixx**

Mixx is a general-interest social news site that allows members to submit stories, photos, and videos from the web in a wide range of categories.
Members can also vote and comment on submissions. Topics covered include business, entertainment, sports, health, and technology, among others. Mixx members can also create tweets for the Twitter microblog about the stories they submit directly from the Mixx website. And Mixx is linked to Facebook.

The most popular stories submitted by Mixx members are displayed on the website’s main page, along with the top photos and top websites. Anyone can browse these lists and click on links that take you to the original source material. A navigation bar near the top of the page takes you to lists of other popular stories, photos, and videos, as well as links to content from CNN, USA Today, and stories flagged as “Breaking News.”
Chapter 9

Measuring Your Results

“We manage what we measure” goes the business school dictum. But can that sage advice be applied to social media marketing? Can you really quantify the success of your efforts? The answer you get depends on the person you ask, but there is broad consensus on what you should be tracking and what those metrics mean.

Before you start measuring your social media marketing activities, you’ll want to establish some baselines. Think of this as a weigh-in, a record of your starting point. See where you stand now: How many followers do you have on Twitter, friends on Facebook, connections on LinkedIn? How often have your tweets been retweeted in the past month? To date? How often are your comments liked? If you’re using the tools mentioned in this book, write down your current status within that tool—your
Klout Score, for example (more on Klout to follow) or your visibility rating. How often is your name or company mentioned right now on the social Web? What’s the current level of traffic to your Website?

Whatever you plan to measure, you will need to figure out where you stand right now and write that down. If you’ve created measurable objectives, the meaning behind the changes in these numbers will probably be pretty clear. In other words, if you know where you’re going, you’ll probably see just how close you are to getting there. More followers and increased sales are pretty straightforward, and essential, metrics. But some of the other stuff you’ll end up deciding to measure may seem less obvious, at least at first. In this chapter, you’ll learn how to figure out what to keep track of.

**Keep It Simple**

The best strategy for individuals and small organizations today is to keep it simple, apply the current set of best practices, use the top tools, and then decide for yourself which metrics really seem to be helping you to achieve your goals.
More good news: measuring the value and/or impact of your social media marketing efforts is not expensive—many of the tools are free—but the process does take time and planning.

**What You Can Measure**

When marketing professionals talk about what you should measure/track as you engage in social media marketing, the term they use is *metrics*, which just means quantitative measures—in other words, the number of things.

There are a several social media metrics you’ll want to track and evaluate. You’ll want to collect information about the content you are posting—who’s seeing it, who likes it, who doesn’t like it—but also about trending topics and conversations that you might want to join.

Some of the things you’ll want to measure are simple and straightforward. How many people are following me on Twitter? How many fans does your Facebook Page have? Some of will be less tangible. What’s my level of influence? What’s the perception of my brand? To get a balanced picture of the
efficacy of your social media marketing efforts you’ll want to measure both.

**The Hard Numbers**

It’s not all that difficult to collect quantitative data around your social media activities. In other words, there are lots of things you can actually count on the social web. You probably won’t find all of the items on the following list of social media metrics relevant to your goals, and there are others, but this should give you a place to start:

- Number of Twitter followers, Facebook friends and fans, and LinkedIn connections
- Overall increases in these numbers, as well as increases over thirty-, sixty-, and ninety-day periods
- Number of times your content is shared—retweets, mentions, Facebook shares, etc.
- Number of friends of friends sharing your content
- How often your name or company is mentioned—daily, weekly, and monthly
- Website traffic from social media sources
- Number of mentions, positive
- Number of Twitter mentions, negative
- Number of Facebook likes and dislikes
- Most popular key terms or phrases
- Trending topics related to you and/or your business
- How many times people are clicking on the links you send out via Twitter
- Frequency of words used in conjunction with your brand
- Most popular categories/topics/types of links
- Number of leads generated
- How far your tweets traveled
- Number of Twitter followers, Facebook friends, and LinkedIn connections made online and met offline
- Number of Twitter followers, Facebook friends, and LinkedIn connections with which you’ve subsequently collaborated
- Referrals from social network contacts
- Actual sales (say, from a feature-rich fan page)
- Prospect-to-hire conversion rate
- Votes and survey responses
- Time spent on a fan page
• Response time—for example, the time it takes a company to respond to an online complaint, but it also applies to just a mention
• Engagement during—for example, the length of time social network members are spending on your fan page
• Number of active members in your network—for example, the number of Facebook accounts that have become fans of your Page are active network participants
• Number of conversations—this is a marketing term for the number of your network members who actually become customers

Some of these numbers are contained in some social media metrics categories:

**Reach**

How many people saw a keyword or phrase associated with your brand? *Reach* is a measure of how far, literally, you’re social media marketing content is ranging. You might think of it as your sphere of influence. In traditional media terms, it’s
the number of impressions or “uniques,” the number of eyeballs you attracted.

**Volume**

*Volume* refers to the total number of your Twitter followers and your followers-to-following ratio; your total number of Facebook fans and the ratio of new fans to removed fans, the number of monthly active users, and their viewing of things like photos. *Volume* is also used to refer to the number of times your name, your brand, your company, or a keyword is mentioned on a social media platform or service over a specified period of time.

**Share of Voice**

This metric is a comparison of your volume against another entity’s volume. Your name, for example, compared with Charlie Sheen’s—or better, someone who’s an actual competitor—say, one newspaper-based movie critic against another.
The Less Tangible Elements: Beyond Metrics

As social media marketing practices have evolved, it’s becoming clearer that the overall number of your friends, fans, and followers might not, in and of itself, be as important as was once thought—which isn’t to say that you don’t want to build up a big list. It’s just that, as a pure measure of the effectiveness of your social media marketing efforts, these numbers have sometimes proved ambiguous or even misleading on their own. Also important are:

- **Engagement**
  Perhaps more important as a measure of the impact of your efforts is *user engagement*. This is another marketing term that encompasses several items from the list. It’s basically about all the stuff your fans and followers do. Are they submitting comments? Do they mention your tweets, share your tweets, or retweet? Do they click on a like button, share your status updates, pass on links to your information? Current conventional wisdom holds that these metrics yield more useful insights about
your relationships and your social media audience, your influence on them, and your ability to spread the good word.

- **Influence**
  How much does what you’re doing on social media affect the attitudes, opinions, and actions of your followers/friends/fans/connections? The answer to that question is the measure of your social media influence. Influence is a high-level measure of your social media presence. It’s derived from some hard numbers—things like number of Twitter followers and mentions, Facebook friends and fans, LinkedIn connections and group members.

- **Social authority**
  This is a measure of how widely you and/or your company are viewed as expert sources. Another tough quality to quantify, the measure of social authority is derived from a combination of your reach and engagement. It’s similar to influence—the more engaged and popular users command more social authority—but this is more
about perception and trust, from which you build influence.

- **Sentiment**
  Also referred to as brand image, this is an important metric that is derived from the comments social media members are making on the social web about you and/or your company. Everything that’s posted about your brand—positive, negative, and even neutral—goes into this measurement. This metric is still evolving, and the tools for measuring it are getting better, but the numbers you see should probably be taken with a grain of salt. You need to track this, just be sure it’s part of a mix of metrics you’re collecting.

- **Buzz**
  Like sentiment, this metric is about what others are saying about you, but it’s focused on the level of their excitement. There’s positive and negative buzz, but there’s no such thing as neutral buzz; that’s an oxymoron. If the social web is buzzing about you and/or your company, you are a
hot topic of conversation. People are expressing strong opinions/reactions, and a lot of them. Buzz is a transient, ephemeral thing, and it might not have as much to do with your social media marketing efforts as other factors, but it might be showing you something you did right … or wrong.

- **Knowledge gained from your followers/friends/fans**
  What you learn while participating in social media is virtually impossible to quantify but potentially invaluable. This one is a true intangible that you’ll just have to judge for yourself.

One of the things most of these metrics have in common is that they’re about actions, which underscores the importance to your marketing efforts of active social media members. From a marketing perspective, all fans are not created equal. It’s the active ones you want to keep track of. Everyone on your network matters in the abstract, of course, but active followers and fans, network influencers, prospects and/or leads, actual buyers, and advocates are actually earning your attention.
Be sure to give it to them. Love the lurkers, too, but remember that the active participants are telling you what’s working. Also, although it probably seems counterintuitive, you can actually quantify the quality of the content generated by your network using such metrics as the number of words in a comment and the complexity of interactions.

**How to Measure?**

*Chapter 7* listed a number of tools to support your social media marketing efforts, but a few more essential tools were more appropriately left for this chapter. They’re particularly helpful when it comes to helping you to measure your results.

**Google Analytics**

This ([www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)) is widely considered to be the must-have tool for measuring website traffic. This is a flexible and easy-to-use tool with features that help you analyze your traffic data. As the company puts it, “With Google Analytics, you’re more prepared to write better-targeted ads, strengthen your marketing initiatives and create higher converting websites.” A
key feature for social media marketers is a tool that checks your referrers to see which sites are sending you the most traffic. There’s a free version for up to 5 million page views a month. If you want to sign up for an active Google AdWords account, you get unlimited page view tracking.

**Google Alerts**

Google Alerts are e-mail updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, Google News, bloggers, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. Again, not a tool specifically for social media marketing, but it’s so easy to use and extremely useful for monitoring a developing news story, keeping current on a competitor or industry, and getting the latest on a celebrity or event, among other things.

**bit.ly**

This URL shortener is probably not the first tool you think of when you’re considering systems for monitoring and analyzing social media. Every bit.ly link has an info page, and that page reveals the number of related clicks and other relevant data. Bit.ly is currently integrated with Tweetdeck,
Seesmic, Twitterfeed, and Qwitter. This is a free, straightforward, easy-to-use, and surprisingly helpful utility for capturing social media metrics.

**Klout**

The San Francisco company ([www.klout.com](http://www.klout.com)) was founded in 2010, and already the Klout Score is on its way to becoming the standard measure of influence on Twitter. Some third-party Twitter apps are now displaying your Klout Score on their dashboards. Klout calculates the ratio of the number of people who follow you to the number of people you follow, the number of people you follow who also follow you, and the number of unique senders and retweeters; puts it all together in a blender; and comes up with a kind of Twitter credit score. Klout has actually defined a few of its own social media metrics: *true reach*, which is “the size of your engaged audience;” *amplification*, which “indicates how likely it is that your content will be acted upon;” and *network*, which in this case is “a measurement of the influence level of the people who interact with you.”
Facebook Insights Dashboard

This is an analytics tool provided by Facebook for Facebook Pages. (Search on “insights” once you are logged into Facebook.) It’s designed to show Page administrators how their posts and content are engaging fans, data on likes, comments, and unlikes. This tool has some limitations: These metrics—or Insights—are only available for Pages that have been liked by at least thirty people.

ForSight

This social media analysis and monitoring platform from Crimson Hexagon (www.crimsonhexagon.com) is designed to track the online conversation about you and/or your company and distill meaning about brands, products, services, competitors, or any important topic. It allows you to track many of the things discussed in this chapter, including how consumers truly feel about your brand and products, what complaints people have, why consumers are choosing another brand, what a company’s advertising and marketing really mean to people, what are the most important factors to consumers when choosing a product in your category, and who are the most influential individuals regarding your
brand, category, or topic of interest. The tool seems to be aimed at larger organizations, but it’s worth keeping on your radar.

**Twitter Search**

A much more affordable, if rudimentary, tool is Twitter’s native search engine (*search.twitter.com*). Use it to track keywords and/or phrases related to you and your business in real time. It isn’t fancy, but it’s a direct and low-budget (read: free) tool that yields some useful information in the moment.

**Tweetbeep**

This tool allows you to track of conversations that mention you, your products, and/or your company on Twitter with hourly updates! You can also use it to keep track of who’s tweeting your website or blog, even if they use a shortened URL. There’s a free and paid version.

**TweetReach**

This tool is designed to provide detailed analysis on how far a search term has spread on Twitter. In other words, it analyzes your reach. It’s a useful tool for seeing just how many different users received tweets
about a topic you initiated or that interests you. The Pro version provides a higher level of analysis and a real-time TweetReach Tracker.

**BackType**

This is a very simple social analytics platform for searching mentions and keywords across the web. You just enter a URL, a topic, or a person’s name and click the Analyze button. You can set the system to send you an e-mail whenever a search term is mentioned in a social media comment.

**HowSociable?**

This website ([www.howsociable.com](http://www.howsociable.com)) provides a simple tool for measuring the visibility of your name and brand across twenty-two different social media services, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, reddit, MySpace, Bebo, and Digg, among others. Essentially, it tracks mentions of you and your brand and collects them in a kind of dashboard. You just type in a search term and the system produces a visibility score for each of the sites. There’s a free version and a Pro version with additional features.
Social Mention

“Like Google Alerts for social media” declares the website for this social media search and analysis platform. Social Mention aggregates a range of user-generated content from the social web, including blog posts, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos, and posts to microblogging services. The result is what is known as a point-in-time social media search. The platform monitors more than 100 social media properties directly, including Twitter, Facebook, FriendFeed, YouTube, Digg, and Google, among others. It lets you know what’s happening with daily e-mail alerts about your brand, company, your name, your marketing campaign, news stories about your or your company or a competitor, or whatever you want to track.
Managing your social media marketing efforts can be a distracting, time-consuming process. Even a simple strategy gets complicated when it involves more than one community and/or service (as it should). But it’s worth it for the same reason that learning how to use the telephone and direct-mail mailers as marketing tools was worth doing thirty years ago. This is how consumers evaluate, communicate, and, ultimately, decide to take action by buying. Ignore those consumers and their preferred communication channels at your own peril.

The game has changed a great deal in just the last few years, and the pace of change in the world of marketing has now become so rapid that it seems inevitable that some new platform, technology, or communications tool will emerge before too long
that changes the game once again. Nobody knows what that new platform will be, but here’s a prediction about it: *It will give you the opportunity to do a better job of listening to your customers and prospective customers.* If you use it with that goal in mind, you will succeed.

Here’s to success—and the road ahead!
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