

How To Find Influencers and Win Friends, The Right Way

Dominate using social media, using methods even the big companies don't know

Fall 2011

You're looking for a way to expand your business. You want to leverage all the free information in social media, and your goal is to laser in on the people who are already talking about or interested in you, or it should be.

This action-packed compendium of social media brilliance will astound your senses by giving you more than 50 pages of how-to, why, what to measure, and ultimately, the best offer ever: an unfair market advantage to the readers who act on the wealth of groundbreaking advice within.



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A Foreword from World-Renown Marketing Expert Jay Abraham

It has been my great pleasure to work with SocialMatica, a true pioneer in the as-yet largely uncharted world of social media. If you aggregate their team's years of experience, vast knowledge, innovative thinking, and stubborn refusal to be seduced by nebulous theory, this social media guru represents the best of the best.

SocialMatica's spent considerable money researching and developing real, hard-core, actionable methods and strategies to show you how to make not only well-founded decisions on how to allocate your digital marketing dollar, but to do so with unshakable confidence that you've uncovered every bit of intelligence at your disposal. They look at the realities of social/digital media, questioning and challenging all the assumptions and belief systems currently being touted by well intentioned (perhaps), but woefully factually impoverished, self-proclaimed "experts." They've put in the sweat equity and come to some hard, provable, powerful, profitable conclusions that at least at this point in time I don't think *anyone* else grasps, frankly.

In our current endeavor together, we have predominantly catered and contoured to large corporations and big agencies that pay us millions of dollars in fees. But it seems tragic and shameful not to try to distill all this expertise down, and share it clearly and actionably with SMBs like yours because they, more than any, probably need it most. So Director of Social Joshua Barnes has generously shared in these pages exactly how Social Media "works its magic" — though rest assured, it's not magic at all, but solid, hardcore, market-proven information.

So we've tried in this document to give you a reality check, to give you some powerful understanding, an amazingly clarified grasp of where the real opportunities lie in social/digital media; what strategies really need to be understood, depending on the kind of business; what's worthless and what's not; why most people are brutally wrong in the strategy approach, and even their focus and concentration; and, where *your* biggest opportunities lie.

What follows is our attempt to, short and sweet, get to the point; get you the fundamental education; get you a grasp; and get you some solid, actionable things to do. And then if we can be of any other service, we're here for you. But we hope that this gives you a huge leg up in understanding, action, decision-making, and HOW YOU AND YOUR COMPANY can proactively and strategically capitalize, honorably, ethically, authentically, on social media.

DON'T simply rely on guessing. (You'll read this over and over again in the valuable advice to follow — but it can't be said enough.) Easier said than done, you say? You're in for a life-changing revelation: Here's exactly how set and measure your own metrics to determine the efficacy of your social media. We want you to short cut the timeline, eliminate the waste, maximize the effort, time, access and impact of every dollar and *second* you spend on social and digital marketing.

However, there's a rub, and the rub's a painful one. As your eyes begin to open to the possibilities that have been waiting for you all along — many of them, believe it or not, FREE for the taking — you'll realize that until now your approach has been setting you up to go the way of the dinosaurs. You've been judging your baseball game on errors instead of runs scored. (Don't worry: we'll be gentle.)

But now it's time for you to claim your place in the new business landscape that has so many — maybe all — of your competitors sweating under the collar. I'm excited for you, because you'll be positioned to go places you've never thought possible, and to get there first.

Without further ado, let's dig into the good stuff.



Faith No More

Don't simply rely on guessing. Here's how to set and measure your own metrics, to determine the efficacy of your social media efforts.

As I jump into this admittedly tough topic of ‘translating social media data into action steps’ I wanted you to know that I’m assuming one of three things about your knowledge of social media and social media marketing:

- You know a lot
- You know a little
- You don’t know anything

And that covers pretty much everyone, right? That’s intentional, because truthfully, it doesn’t matter. Regardless of where you fall, I’ve been there before and I’m here to guide you through it. I’m here to help you concern yourself with what *really* matters in Social Media. I’m going to show you how to conceptualize Social Media in such a way that it’s no longer cloaked in mystery. With my help, you’ll be able to objectively filter through the voluminous market data being amassed every minute of every day, extracting what’s **most relevant to you**. I’m going to demystify Social Media to the point at which you can truly trust your instincts on how to leverage it.

I’ll show you how to measure a Facebook like, an incoming link or a search engine mention in such a way that you’re able to predict what your competitors are trying to do in marketing. When you understand that, you can do all kinds of sorting to the data which immediately produces two things for you: first and foremost, an unfair advantage for you. That’s a good thing.

Secondly, you’ll prioritize your actions better, helping make your marketing investment decisions based on data — NOT what everyone else is doing, which is guessing. (We’ll cover exactly what I think about guessing a little later, but here’s a hint: it’s stupid, unless you have to as a last resort...in which case it’s still stupid, but at least you know it is, which *almost* makes it smart.)

I’m your Social Media Sherpa, and I want you to know that this is bi-directional communication, not a lecture. With that, let’s dive into just a bit of history before we “pig out on the meat of the matter.”

Social Media has unintentionally created two amazing benefits for small- to medium-sized businesses, both of which offer wide-sweeping implications to traditional marketing. (Don’t

worry if this doesn't immediately resonate; it will.) When we understand these implications, we can explore all the vast opportunities that they present.

First, Social Media has firmly ensconced two-way communication in the minds of all consumers. That's huge, and very different from traditional marketing methods! It means everyone who buys something suddenly gets a vote on how that business runs — and it means altogether more than just that. (More on that later.)

Second, by way of the first...two-way communication has awakened us to realize that traditional marketing has really been just a bunch of guessing. (Remember my rule on guessing; tell me if you disagree.) Admittedly, there are some rudimentary math calculations that can tell us how much a lead costs, but there's really nothing predictive and nothing that can be systematically tested.

The result is that for companies who must spend money on marketing, they now have the ability to disrupt traditional marketing models that require a high level of trust in their marketing people, who in turn operate *without* a high order to empirical data to choose from in order to make decisions. Which basically means this: we now have the power to tell the sales guy "No!" when he asks us, however politely, to "Trust me."

It's this second point, which is the beginning and end of this guide; which states "Faith No More – Learn The Methods To Stop Guess-Marketing."

Traditional marketing (print, online and television) require guessing to decide where to invest your marketing dollars. Yet there is widely available online digital data to guide our decisions, *if you know where to find it* (and I do). It's ludicrous not to harness its power. If we don't, we're left guessing as to where, on what or who, and when we spend our hard-earned dollar. What's more, we have no basis to even decide "**if**" we should engage in any one marketing method.

If that causes you to stumble a little, realize that I'm not putting traditional marketing down or saying that it's worthless. Rather, I'm imparting a revelation in methodology, so that when I talk about where we're going you'll be able to see the obvious differences and easily move into the newer model. When I say, "easily move," understand that this is relative. Some people will always buy and guess versus research and build.

This new model requires effort, data collection and a willingness to connect the data points. I trust that when you see what I'm talking about it will ignite a fire in your bones to jump into the data that is widely available, easy to collect --- and *free*. For those of us who want real, hard data to base our decisions on, our ship has come in.

A Theme: What I Want For Christmas

Now that we're through the history and introduction, let's talk basic concepts.

Traditional marketing can be summed in two specific themes: first, broadcast messaging (you may have also heard this called "one too many," or PR), and second, that familiar villain, guessing.

The model that I'm unveiling here can be summed in two themes as well: two-way, community-led communication that investigates, understands and acts on the beliefs and motivations of its intended target; and the second (again, by way of the first), closed loop marketing efficacy.

Don't get all bumbly because of my three-dollar words. All I'm saying is that we can see data that will help us make decisions, and then we can prove that there is a connection. That concept is slightly scary because it's prophetic, and words of prophecy don't exist in marketing. Rather, the traditional mantra is "Spend money and hope." When you understand that real, hard data is created by the first theme, then we can measure it and accordingly create the second theme with expediency.

The method is not complicated, but it requires some new terminology and definitions. Once we understand how this information works together, the insights from our data become obvious, and trends predictable.

Before we jump into that, let's cover Social Media at a very high-level.

Social networks are just modern day drive-ins — the modern teenage hangouts (except adults go there, too). Many people try to create "techno-descriptions" about the business values and definitions. I think that's all a bunch of noise aimed at trying to make the creator look smart. I think ideas are best explained simply.

Social networks are attractive because they offer something digitally that we like to do physically. Conversely, those networks that *don't* give us something familiar to us from our real-life — aren't participated in. For instance:

- Facebook is the family picnic, and thus, memory lane
- Twitter is the new texting or email, but broadcast for everyone to see
- LinkedIn is the pub where we can talk about jobs and ideas that affect jobs
- YouTube is two-way television, with all the amenities you could ask for
- Google is the new bus driver who gives me the ability to go places, but also to establish my own brand identity
- Blogging is the "new convenience store of ideas"

I trust that you have enough experience in some or all of these social networks and platforms so that you can relate.

Suffice to say, all of this social network interaction has two miraculously measurable effects. First, it tells us what people think and care about. And second, it tells us how effective our marketing is. Once we understand those ideas, then everything else that I'm about to talk about is just the means to measure how effective we are.

Bear in mind that the second point (how effective our marketing is) is built around understanding the measurement model I'm proposing. The beauty of that model is built around a global data mosaic and iterative data collection and review.

How does that saying go? "Marketing isn't hard if you know what people want..." (Or maybe that's my saying.) Regardless, the statement is self-evident: it means that skills most pertinent to marketing emphasize being able to understand what your customers want, more so than the ability to master specific gimmicks or skills. Sure, they help, but they aren't why people consistently buy.

I say this because it's easy to get caught in new ideas and fancy gift-wrap. But the substance of everything I'm revealing here is *data*, and how it works together. Specifically, I'm talking about how we can tap into the idea of what people are interested in by measuring how effective our competitor's (and our own) marketing program is.

This borrows from the concept that we can't be effective focusing on exceptions; we've got to find the critical mass that could be called "the rule" when it comes to messaging. It's my position that when you take your whole vertical market into account, you can literally extract what is effective messaging and what is not, based on how people respond. And the beauty is, it doesn't cost anything other than time.

So let's talk about the process of uncovering what people think, and in the same way we can also define a process of capturing how well it's received. That gives us a closed loop-efficacy program that measures social media marketing performance.

Here are some terms I'll use:

- Social Data Gathering – Collecting The Data
- Social Insights & Intelligence – Analyzing and Interpreting The Data



- Social Recommendations – Determining The Best Action Plan For Improvement
- Social Delivery – The Implementation
- Social Velocity – The Assumption That Enough Activity Exists To Be Measured

Now, let's us turn our focus on a simple strategy for measuring what's going on right under our noses. Mainly I'm talking about social media events; I'm talking about likes, followers, subscribers, views and whatever other adverb your favorite network of choice uses to define activity.

Social Data Gathering

In the collection phase, we obviously need to know "what" to collect. I've listed several boil-up statistics below that are calculated based on multiple data points. They have their own meaning and definition that is also covered below. It's important to understand that some of these processes involve several data points and require a mathematical ranking system. Optimally, once we master this approach together, you'll define your own custom ranking system based on what you discover in your market.

But first let's define the terms, and then I'll show you what and how to collect them.

Social Performance – a ranked calculation of all the social performance networks, using all the cumulative totals of each network's unit of measurement — i.e., a like or a follower — and ranking them against the leader, website traffic, in-links, etc.

Share of Voice – a ranked calculation of the traffic that each website in the comparison has relative to the total

Share of Mention – a ranked calculation of the brand mentions or base URL references using a search engine query — i.e., "Cisco Systems" – site:cisco.com — which will return all references to the brand Cisco Systems, and exclude any references to Cisco's actual website.

Share of Audience – a ranked calculation of the digital audience that a social identity has that represents their marketable or addressable members. Examples include YouTube Subscribers, Twitter Followers, Followers of Followers, etc.

Syndication – the amount of times (as a percentage relative to audience) that a social identity's original content is uniquely repeated throughout the Internet, as measured by unique links to that content

What To Collect:

Now I'm going to give you "a peek behind the curtain" at some of the exact methods I use in gathering the information I use when building a decision-making marketing strategy.

But first, some reassurance: Tons of research, experience, and statistical testing have gone into SocialMatica's development of these methods. **DON'T LET THEM INTIMIDATE YOU.** You **DON'T** have to go it alone. We're here to guide, educate, direct, advise, and send you off on your path to superior, exemplary marketing in the new digital landscape. My purpose here is **NOT** to dump a load of scary terms and excruciating labor on you, nor will I let you get lost in the maze. I merely want to dispel the nebulous mystery of the process, and reassure you that we're not talking magic here; rather, this is solid real, reliable statistical analysis.

This is where we get down to brass tacks. And this is also where you get to roll up your sleeves, *if* you're serious about dominating your market, and do the work. Please bear in mind, I can write pages...chapters... *books* to teach you how to zero in on exactly what you need to know to put an end to "guess marketing," and stop bleeding your marketing dollars away. What I *can't* teach is motivation. But I can guarantee you that if you have the desire to dominate, and you harness and leverage this information, your success will provide all the motivation you'll ever need.

In order to understand how effective your overall space is and how effective you are compared to your competitors, you must have information to collect. (I've listed some good examples below; you may discover other useful information.) The more data that is collected leads to a more accurate picture. The data is all there for the taking, and we've perfected the easiest and most accurate way to mine it. But you may want to try your own hand; if so, try to collect as much relevant data as you can. Try not to let it age more than 14 days, and definitely not more than 30 days. Here are the data points to collect:

- Facebook Likes
- Twitter Followers, Followed, Listed, Tweets, RT's and Mentions
- LinkedIn Page Followers
- YouTube Subscribers, Page Views, Upload Views
- Blog & Website Traffic, Time On Site, Bounce Rate
- Incoming Links – the amount of incoming links that an entire website has
- Traffic – the amount of unique visitors a particular website has
- Brand Mentions – the amount of search engine references to a brand name and/or a base URL, i.e., yahoo.com, not www.yahoo.com.
- Syndication – taking the Title &/or the URL of a blog post and using a search engine string to find the number of search engine references to it; ideally six months of content is used

Here's how the data fits together. Further down I've included examples of this data being graphed.

Social Performance	Share of Voice	Share of Mention	Share of Audience	Syndication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes • Followers • Subscribers • Unique Visitors • Incoming Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand References in a search engine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Audience • Subscribers • Followers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of unique search engine reference to original content

Social Performance Example Calculation

The Rank Formula that is built into Excel can be a very useful way of speeding up the ranking of several items. Let's take a look at the formula and see how this can help us out:

=rank(number, ref, order)

where *number* is the number whose rank you want to find; *ref* is a reference to the range of numbers you want to rank against (non-numeric values in the range are ignored), and *order* refers to the way you want to ranking to appear – 0 or blank for descending and a non-zero number for ascending.

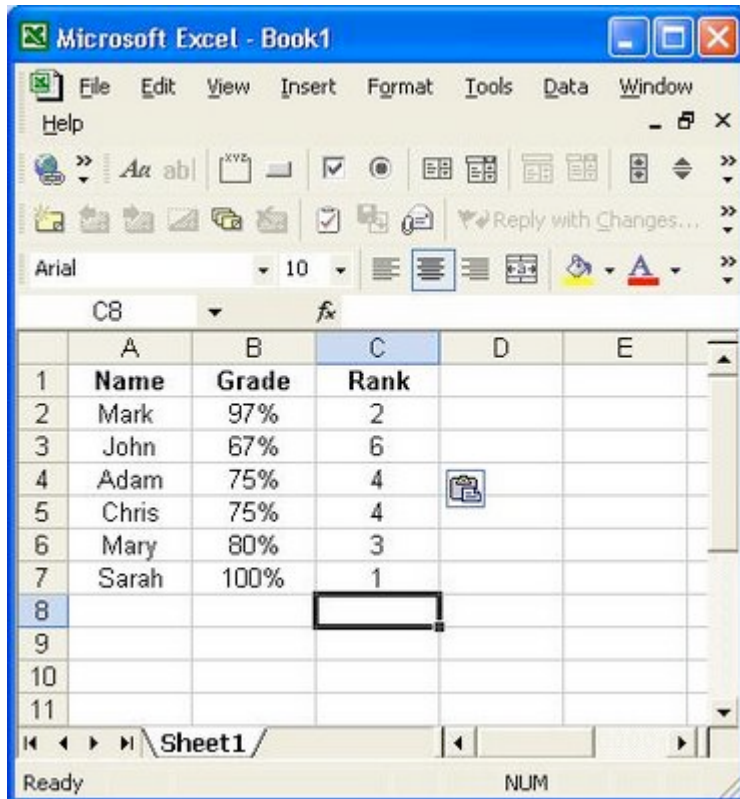
EXAMPLES

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Name	Grade			
2	Mark	97%			
3	John	67%			
4	Adam	75%			
5	Chris	75%			
6	Mary	80%			
7	Sarah	100%			
8					
9					
10					
11					

Example 1: =rank(B2,B2:B7) will return 2. Since we left the *order* reference blank it ranked in descending order and 97% is the second highest score in the list.

Example 2: =rank(B3,B2:B7,1) will return 1. Since this time we filled in *order* with a non-zero number it returned in ascending order and 67% was the lowest score.

Example 3: In this example, please refer to the image below of the updated spreadsheet. To obtain this result, all we had to do was take the formula in example 1 and lock some values (=rank(B2, \$B\$2:\$B\$7)). After you enter this in cell C2, you just need to pull the formula down and it will fill the rest in correctly.



	A	B	C	D	E
1	Name	Grade	Rank		
2	Mark	97%	2		
3	John	67%	6		
4	Adam	75%	4		
5	Chris	75%	4		
6	Mary	80%	3		
7	Sarah	100%	1		
8					
9					
10					
11					

Source¹

Insights and Intelligence

Once you've collected this information for you and your competitors, you simply compile them into totals and divide by the number of companies compared in order to get the various shares of. For instance, to get the **Share of Voice** statistic, simply perform the following calculation:

$$\text{Site A Traffic} + \text{Site B Traffic} + \text{Site C Traffic} = \text{Total Traffic}$$

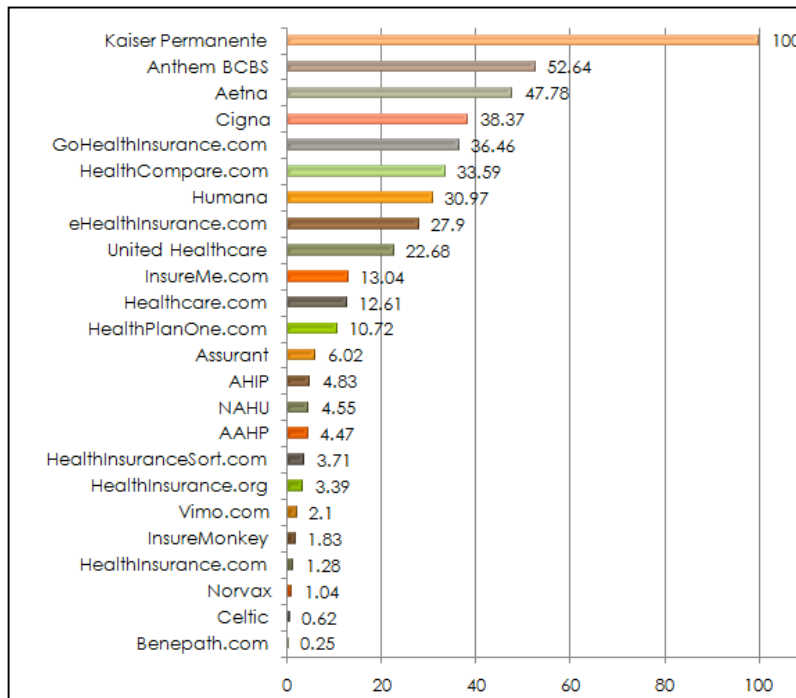
$$\text{Site A Traffic} / \text{Total Traffic} = \text{Share of Voice}$$

Just repeat this for each statistic. When you have all this data collected, you can cut and carve this data any way you want. Insights come from looking at the data in the ways previously unreachable and by connecting data points that we couldn't connect before because the data was too disconnected to be able to see the patterns. Now we can coalesce the data into a single view so that we can see real insight and therefore plug the gushing hole of guessing in our marketing programs.

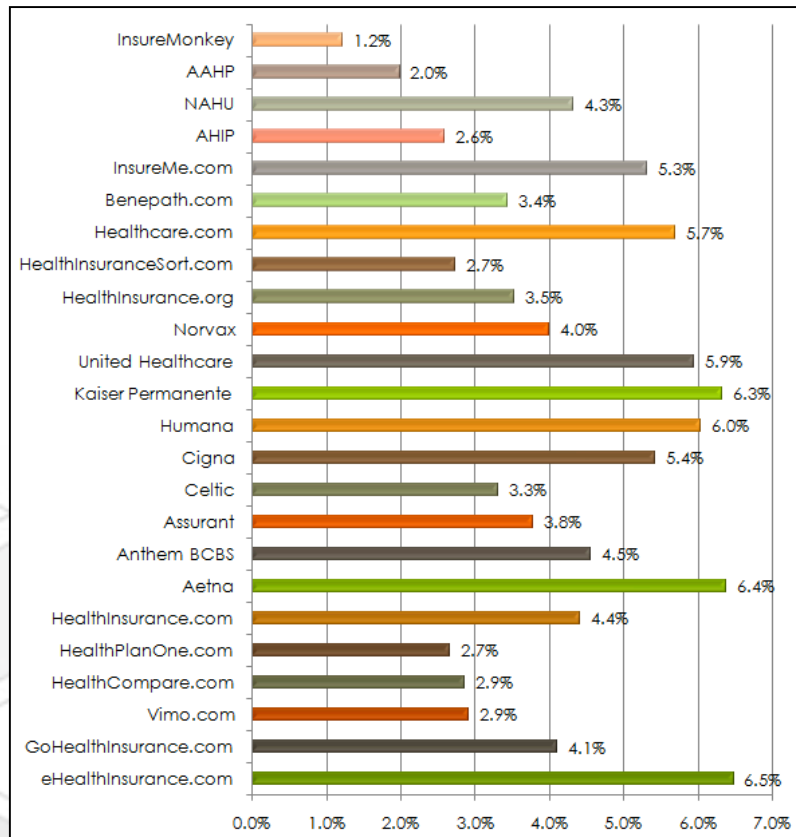


Here's an example of the data graphed:

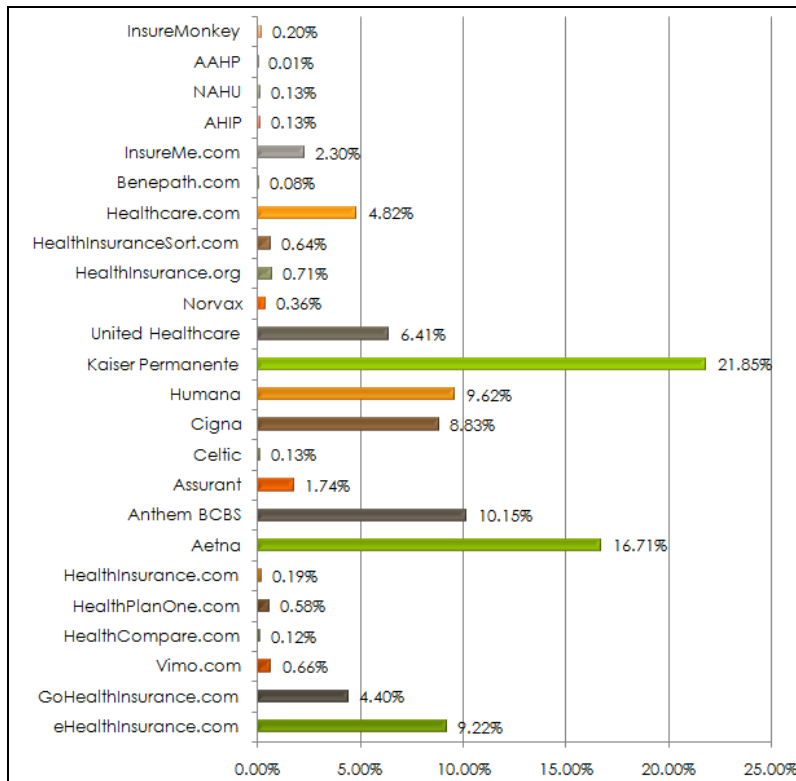
Social Performance



Share of Mention



Share of Voice



These are just visualizations, and admittedly they won't seem entirely relevant to you; imagine however, that this is your data. Imagine that these are your competitors. What would it mean then?

Based on this, we can see that Kaiser Permanente is leading in their social performance, but they aren't necessarily the leader in the amount of distinct brand references. You can immediately infer that Kaiser, while currently leading in overall social performance, is not doing anything substantively efficacious in terms of new brand mentions or references. We know that because their share of mention is 6.3 percent and Aetna and eHealthinsurance.com are beating them out. The next statistic confirms what we see and tells us something else at the same time.

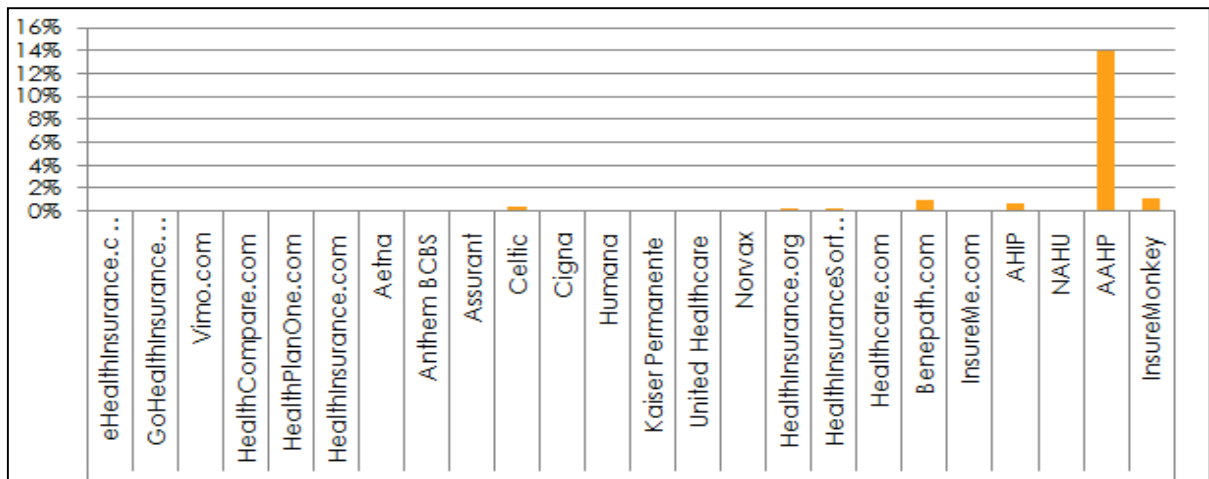
Share of Voice

We see that Kaiser, Aetna and eHealthinsurance.com are leading. Based on what we've seen so far, it's most likely that Kaiser is leading in social performance due to their website traffic performance, since it's part of our Social Performance calculation (as discussed above). If we look further into the social data, we might find that Kaiser is not necessarily leading in their social network participation. If it were, we should expect to see the same

kind of domination in mentions that we do in traffic and social performance, but we do not. Interesting no?

The next statistic that would really give us insight into what Kaiser is doing is Syndication.

Syndication



What we notice immediately is that Kaiser, relative to their online audience, doesn't have any significant Syndication. This means, if they are blogging or distributing original content to their audience, it is NOT being repeated enough to create a blip here. Based on those three data points, we can easily infer that Kaisers' social performance lead is not based on organic, authentic, audience engagement. It may be based on time in the market, huge marketing campaigns, or simply having a web-access site that their parishioners can access. Again, since we've narrowed what it is, we can also eliminate what it is not.

Effective!

Moving along to the next phase of Recommendations and Implementations, I'd like to make a comment. These two steps are simply part of the process that any team can create based on the data that the new model produces, so I won't cover that in superlative detail here. Suffice to say though, there are many companies that can help you execute this with a relatively low over-head cost. We give you *the right way to think about the recommendations* — and furthermore, the implementation. We can also offer example ideas as a springboard to this data.

Social Recommendations

Recommendations should be limited to the insights that the data reveals, when organized this way. Other data points we might be able to look at as we're thinking about

recommendations are built up around a couple of ideas and basic questions that any marketing program should be able to answer. Let's cover them now...

Questions You're Trying To Answer

1. How is my company doing versus my competitors online?
2. Which competitors dominate? Where and why do they dominate?
3. What would it take for my company to improve its social effectiveness?
4. What is the market talking about and concerned about --- and are they the same?
5. What specific steps should my company take in order to improve its ranking?

These ideas can be further sub-divided into 3 basic ideas in marketing.

1. Social Media Branding Strategy – Which networks represent the best places for branding based on the data?
2. Social Media Conversion Strategy – Which networks and strategies will be best for conversion events, like email address acquisition, or white paper downloads, etc., based on the data?
3. Tool Modifications and Report Enhancement

I realize that we've not been able to uncover in detail the ways to answer the questions above, but when we start collecting your data, some of these questions will have obvious answers. The big-picture, bottom-line statement here is that we've been guessing all this time. I'm putting an end to that, and proposing a proven system of solid measurement. Everything I'm saying in this report is best understood with the experience you'll gain just by starting to measure the data outlined above.

Case Example:

Imagine you conducted this same report on all your online advertisers. You could instantly rank the top three performers. NOW imagine that you looked at that *before* you signed the next check to purchase banner ads, or placed an article. Do you think that would improve performance? Obviously, resoundingly --- **YES**.

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Once we've collected all of our information and looked at the various 'Share of' statistics, then we can turn our attention to more detailed information that will give us a greater understanding of what's going on in the market.

“How is my company doing versus its competitors online?”

The answer lies in all the data, in one conglomerate data view. We can't know by looking at any single statistic, but rather by taking the global mosaic into account.

Some of the derivative areas to look will be social networks, for instance, how each social identity is performing. This will give us insight into where our competitors are gathering their strength, and will inherently answer how much it will cost to enter the market — or whether we even *should*. So instead of Tweeting just because everyone else is, you can Tweet because you know where the competition is (if they are deriving strength from that channel) and how big the gap is for dominance. This way, you have a closed-loop efficacy program concerning social media — in our example, Twitter. Now you're spending money based on empirical data and knowledge of what it takes to gather strength and dominate — and NOT conjecture and “best-practice” opinions.

When it comes to building specific steps to improve your overall social rank (a measure of marketing performance efficacy), you now have a system to organize and rank our ideas by. For instance, using the example above, if I wanted to dominate mentions because I see a causal link, over time, to mentions and new traffic spikes, then I know that I must start building unique, original and authentic interactions with my organic content. If I do this, the audience can engage — and if my content is good, they'll want to.

All this comes from looking at the data, NOT from trying to shoehorn a one-size-fits-all, best practice approach (aka, legitimized guessing) to finding *what will work best for you*.

Conclusion

If you come away from this article with one lesson, I want it to be that you don't have to guess anymore. Guessing **is** institutional, so don't be surprised when people expect you to do it — but you'll know better.

A Story

Let me make my final point by way of anecdote. When I was 22 I went to a dentist, an old dentist. His tools were not shiny, and I had honest concerns for my safety since I was about to have my first tooth removed due to a root canal by a previous dentist gone badly. Like many people, I'd always had incredibly bad dental experiences, even as a child. So needless to say, I was nervous. That is, until he gave me the first shot of Novocain. It didn't hurt. I immediately noticed. “My eyes didn't even water. Why is that?” His response... “You see most dentists are in too much of a hurry. They don't take the time to find the nerve. Instead of waiting for the topical Novocain to work, then slowly delivering the

Novocaine, they drive it in; then you feel pain. Not only that; when they drill, it hurts. A properly-numbed nerve will not feel pain.”

I felt like the world had been lifted off my shoulders! This man, who’d started in the 1940’s as a Peace Corp dentist, had explained to me in five minutes the reason why I’d felt pain since I was four years old. I was being forced to — and possibly, purposely kept in the dark by my ignorance of the process. It was easier, or no one knew any better. Experience is the best teacher!

Once informed, however, I knew I would be able to take this to any dentist and tell them, without feeling like a sissy, that pain is not only unacceptable, it’s unnecessary. With that information I was able to make the service providers I work with, work for me, eliminating undesirable effects.

That is my goal for you; that you can forever more carry this into marketing conversations with the practitioners you work with: **Guessing is not only unacceptable, it’s *totally unnecessary*.**

SocialMatica is committed to the success of small- to medium-sized businesses. By the very nature of what we’re doing as a company, we intend to change the face of modern social media marketing. To that end, if you’d like to know more about how we can help automate these processes for you, and teach you more about social media marketing, subscribe to our blog at www.socialmatica.com.

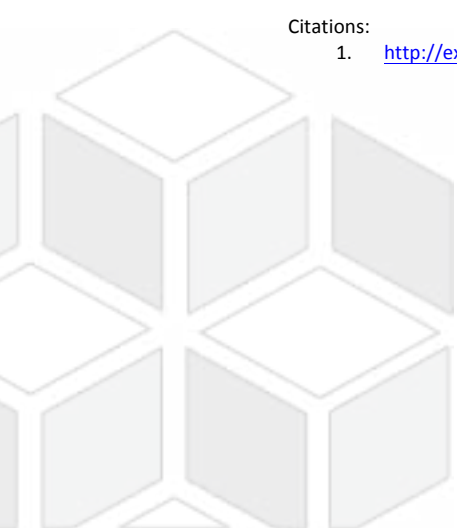
Also, please consider reading part two of this guide, which is:

How To Start Dominating Your Competitors In 90 Days Using Social Media

This is a very tactical guide and is meant to read as radio instructions. It lays out specific steps to set up all your social network profiles...how to interconnect them so that you can publish all your content from a single place...how-to’s concerning best practices for naming and branding...and gives you a specific case study example of how to leverage Facebook. Let’s dive in!

Citations:

1. <http://excelhints.com/2007/06/15/rank-formula-in-excel/>



How To Start Dominating Your Competitors in Social Media in 90 Days!

In writing this guide, I wanted to spend time putting together a literal “how-to” manual that would enable even those of us who have just precious minutes to spare. This guide is written like radio instructions and aimed at those of you who are tired of guessing and tired of not being “in the know” concerning Social Media. Social Media is easy --- *if* you know the hidden tricks and door handles that lead you through the labyrinth. Bear in mind just a couple of assumptions as you read. This guide is a “Tactical How-To” guide. It’s literally the army field manual for Social Media Commandos. It presumes either a level of knowledge about Social Media, or a tenacity that won’t be tripped up by words that aren’t immediately understood.

Remember that Google is your friend and likes to play. I will explain with notes where I think the idea or concept cannot be solved with a simple Google search, and I’ve also gone the extra step of hyper-linking words with links that explain them. Where ever you see a word that you don’t recognize that is also hyper-linked, click it and a browser will launch. If you have any questions throughout the implementation of this guide, please email me at joshua.a.barnes@gmail.com. Without further adieu, I’ll jump right into the guide.

My now-familiar thesis is that guessing is stupid, and you shouldn’t be forced to do it anymore. So I’ve designed a system that will give you Social Media coverage and the ability to execute one-touch-publishing through your Social Media command center. I’m going to, through this guide, put you in the driver’s seat of your Social Media publishing engine and give you the tools to dominate your competitors. You will dominate by volume, by coverage, by tactical execution and through strategic dissemination in the best channels. You’ll dominate because you won’t be guessing anymore.

The first step is to build to plant some flags in the social media land-grab. Then we’ll quickly move into building the engine. Let’s dive in...

★★★★★★★★★★

Social Brand Foot Print:

The networks and platforms you engage in or you can be engaged in by others, leading to notoriety of your chosen brand or message.

★★★★★★★★★★

Setup Your Social Brand Foot Print

Below are the steps to creating a social brand identity. All we’re doing is going out and claiming our territory at this point. No need to worry about how to interconnect the services, or connect the accounts. That will come later. Also, I have training videos for nearly every process listed

below. If you have further questions or need additional help, please email me and I will give you access to the videos you'll need.

Now for the steps required claiming our digital real estate.

1. Pick a brand name or moniker that is recognizable and representative of either your personal brand or business social identity; ex: **joshuaATbarnes**
2. Register a [TLD](#) and derivatives pointing to main TLD ex: **joshuaATbarnes.com**; **.net**; **.info**; **.tv**, etc.
3. Setup [RSS Feed](#) for influential bloggers and keywords of interest
4. Register [Gravatar](#) with your picture or avatar; choose one that best represents your personality and avoid compromising or overly general/group-oriented photos.
 - a. Connect it to your most used profile or social network account, typically you can login in using your preferred social network account
 - b. Sync ALL profiles with the SAME image
5. Register with a [ScribD](#) and/or [ArticleBase](#)
 - a. Register your Pen name and make that different than your admin sign-in name; this allows you to have different authors for future content.
6. Register [Facebook](#)
 - a. Setup Fan Page using Blog Title and Brand Name ex: **["Joshua Barnes: Deconstructing The Argument"](#)**
7. Register [Twitter](#) with you brand name ex: **joshuaATbarnes**
8. Register [LinkedIn](#) with your personal name ex. **Linkedin.com/in/joshuaATbarnes**
 - a. Register your LinkedIn URL with your brand name

Gravatar users can register an account based on their email address, and upload an avatar to be associated with the account. When the user posts a comment on such a blog that requires an e-mail address, the blogging software checks whether that e-mail address has an associated avatar at Gravatar.

ScribD and ArticleBase are ways to release content to large communities that are focused on articles and thought leadership activities; like presentations, white-papers and other downloads. Grabbing your pen name and brand identity just protects you from spammers high jacking your brand in the future.

Digg & StumbleUpon have a fading significance in my opinion, but there are still a great number of people who enjoy the link-exchanging networks. They are highly effective for curation, but Digg, Del.icio.us and StumbleUpon may have seen their best social media days already. That said, StumbleUpon is a great way to tag and locate new content. If you have a strong brand reputation in that network, it can be powerful way to release new content.

- b. You can optionally setup a company for a brand as a pro blogger, even if you're not getting paid to do it.
- 9. Register [Foursquare](#), if you're in a position to make use of it, otherwise it's pretty useless to social media.
- 10. Register [Digg](#) or [Stumbleupon](#) and put it on your browser as a toolbar. Whichever you're more comfortable with and will use.
- 11. Register a [Youtube](#) account with your brand name and a catchy title e.g.

JoshuaATBarnes TV

- a. I recommend that you set your profile to private. This will make it so that only the videos you share will be seen, this should keep YouTube spammers down.
 - b. Consider a blip.tv account if you plan to publish information that is helpful in a DIY kind of way.
 - c. Consider finding or creating a custom intro that you can use for every video, this enhances viewership because it makes it more professional and engagement typically increases as a result.
 - d. Optionally consider a TV or multimedia oriented graphic rather than your photo.
- 12. Setup [Tumblr](#) and [Posterous](#), pick one or the other to be the distribution site for your content. The other will be used to point to your main site and create inbound links.
- 13. Pick the network you will be most present in and focus your interaction energy there.
- 14. Setup [Google Analytics](#) and embed the code in all the websites that you can.

[TUMBLR & POSTEROUS CAN BE VERY USEFUL FOR SHARING LINKS AND BUILDING A COMMUNITY WITHOUT POLLUTING YOUR BLOG WITH MISCELLANEOUS CURATED LINKS – FOR A VIDEO USE CASE FOR POSTEROUS, VISIT [YOUTUBE.COM/NYJBARNES](https://youtube.com/nyjbarnes)]

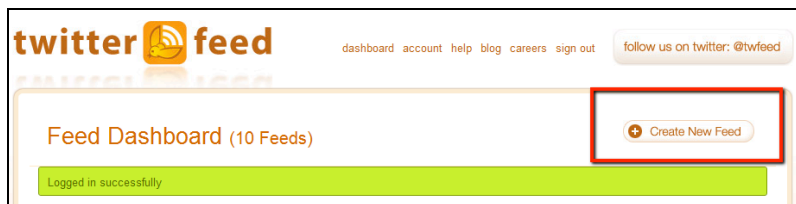
How to Interconnect All of Your Accounts for One-Touch Publishing

In this stage you have a couple of options. There are a number of tools that will publish your content to multiple sites for free and there are also paid options. In my experience, there is as of yet no discernible value in the paid accounts. Now, let's set up your networks and get them connected.

Go to the <http://www.twitterfeed.com>



Create an account and then login. The first thing you'll need to do is "Create New Feed."



Step 1 of creating the feed is to name the feed and then enter your blog or RSS feed that you want fed out to your various social networks.

The advanced settings are useful if you're a marketing person and you want to track specific aspects of each post. For the most part and for the purposes of this guide, we can skip it since it does not add any significant value to our goals.

New Feed

Step 1: Create Feed Step 2: Configure Publishing Services Step 3: Done

Step 1: Name Feed & Add Source URL

Feed Name
Inconsequential Text Here

Blog URL or RSS Feed URL (help)
yourwebsite.com/rss test rss feed

☒ Active

▶ Advanced Settings

Continue to Step 2 Cancel

Make sure to click “test rss feed.” In most cases you can just enter the blog url and the service will go find the correct RSS feed. If it cannot, you’ll need to find the right RSS feed. When you do it correctly it will look like this:

Step 1: Name Feed & Add Source URL

Feed Name
Inconsequential Text Here

Blog URL or RSS Feed URL (help)
http://www.joshuaatbarnes.com/ test rss feed

☒ Active
✔ Feed parsed OK

Finally we can move to step 3.

Feed Publishing
http://www.joshuaatbarnes.com/feed/

Step 1: Create Feed Step 2: Configure Publishing Services Step 3: Done

Feed was successfully created.

Available Services

Twitter

Statusnet

Helioxt

Facebook

Linkedin

All Done! Back to Step 1

Here we can see the networks that twitterfeed.com can publish to. Other services similar to twitterfeed can publish to more networks and if your preferred network is not here then you should investigate another services. [LinksAlpha](#) is a good example of an alternate version. [LinksAlpha](#) has both paid and free versions of their product.

Once you're at this stage, click the network you'd like to have updates published to and a login dialogue box will automatically pop up.

Choose existing Twitter Account or Authenticate a new account

1. Authenticated Twitter Account

--Twitter Account--
2. Authenticate new Twitter Account

 **Authenticate Twitter**
Using OAuth

Authenticate with Username & Password

Authorize twitterfeed to use your account?

This application **will be able to:**

- Read Tweets from your timeline.
- See who you follow, and follow new people.
- Update your profile.
- Post Tweets for you.

joshuaatbarnes

.....

[Forgot your password?](#)

Authorize app

No, thanks

All you have to do is click the “Authenticate Twitter” button and the site will launch a login box to login directly to Twitter.com and give twitterfeed.com permission to publish on your behalf any content that it receives from your RSS feed.

And that’s it. Once that is set, every post that you publish from your blog will automatically be posted to every network that you currently have access to. You can also publish to as many accounts as you like. You can do this by setting up multiple feeds.

A good strategy for building followers is finding websites that publish interesting information and setting up an automatic feed to all of your social networks, using twitterfeed.com. It’s free, legit and awesome.

How to Assimilate Current Behaviors Into Socially Impacting Ones

Are you thinking about now, “How will I have time to do all these activities; I’m already too busy? “

My answer: most of what you’re already doing is participating in networks. The only difference is that *you’re not making the best use of current activity* --- it’s lost potential, nearly as insidious as “guess marketing.”

Below are some guidelines that will help reshape our activities into social impacting ones. For the most part, more activity is better --- but consistent is best. Organize these ideas according to a schedule that you can keep *consistently*, otherwise you’ll be overwhelmed with the sheer amount of effort and mental taxation.

1. Read RSS feed of blogs and keywords setup in your brand footprint

There is a link above if you don’t know what an RSS feed is. But conceptually, you can think of your RSS feed as more than an aggregator of information. It’s a social networking club --- and you get to choose who’s in the club!

2. Write one 1000-word article per month – or create a video talking about something of communal interest
 - a. Reflect on a portion of the article/video and talk about how it affects a particular industry three times a month
 - b. Tweet each blog post twice a day (if you connect Twitter to LinkedIn, everything you do in Twitter will also go to LinkedIn.)

- c. Post every article and re-blog to your Facebook Fan page
 - d. Ask provocative questions on your Fan Page; people WILL respond if you've asked them to.
 - e.
3. Comment on blogs as often as you can, especially [Disqus](#) enabled blogs (pronounced "discuss").
- a. This begins a brand reputation in the "blogosphere" apart from every other community because it tracks the number of comments you've made and how many "likes" you've received.
 - b. Being meaningful is not as important as being present.
 - c. You will establish credibility through presence.
 - d. Be present; people will begin to recognize your picture/brand/personality.
4. Pick a blog or two to complement or antagonize
- a. In WWF-land this is Hulk Hogan versus Andre the Giant; usually they fight, and sometimes they work together for a common good. But this engages the otherwise passive contributor to follow.
 - b. This generates content for your microblog.
 - c. Don't be extreme in either direction until your base of followers is fully set
5. Blog as often as you can be consistent.
- a. I recommend at least once a week for professional blogs, and every day or every other day for personal brand blogs, especially in the beginning.
 - b. Length doesn't matter
 - i. The shorter the better in the beginning
 - ii. Use volume to create relationships with your followers
 - c. Make certain to respond to EVERY comment made on your blog, or social footprint
 - d. Sharing has already been set up, so all you need to do is create compelling content
6. Re-post someone else's blog post and re-populate to your networks
- a. Make certain to mention them on Twitter
 - b. This creates social traction
7. Periodically log on to [TweetDeck](#) and post to all your networks something interesting or a random realization

- a. Try to do this three times a day
 - b. This means that Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn networks will be being touched three times a day through [TweetDeck](#).
 - c. Schedule four-five Tweets a day so that even if you forget or get busy, the network is being touched.
8. Invite as many people as you can to your Facebook Fan Page
 - a. Start a discussion about generic news to get traction
 - b. Eventually start to turn it to your topic of desire
 - c. Talk about anything related to social media
9. Repeat these steps for as many people and networks as you can find until you find the right combination of influential social people and networks. This realization only comes through experience!

Now that we've grabbed our real estate, connected our accounts and talked through "how" to dominate through good habits, let's turn our eyes toward a little bit of Social Media Market Theory. As with any discipline that we want to master, there are general rules. All rules are meant to be broken, but these guides will help us find the motivation should pure desire begin to fade.

Where Does Compelling Content Come From?

Compelling content comes from people sharing social objects. A "social object" is any interaction with a social network where content is generated. And "content generation" is best defined as any interaction where sharing, creating or communication takes place in an externally observable way. So what does that mean? It means that the digital interaction you have online is considered a social object, and is therefore contributing to your overall identity and perceived value.

Let me show you some examples of social objects that we interact with on a daily basis; with building a social brand identity in mind, we can now systematize our efforts towards purposeful interaction with a desired result.

Shared Objects: Defined as any object you did not create yourself.

Content

- Video
- Article

- White Paper
- Blog Post

When people first begin to build themselves or their companies up in Social Media, they're often confused by where content comes from. After all, someone has to create content in order for it to be consumed. This is true... and it's not true.

The reasons it's true are obvious, but where it's not has to do with the concept of "curation." Curation is sharing content to an audience that normally doesn't have access to it. With attribution, the curators receive the same treatment and authority as the content creators themselves.

So in order to build our audiences up, all we really have to do is be on the look out for good content, and have a network to share it with. And that's not at all intimidating, is it? The only real issue is to know how this process fits together; for instance, defining the difference between shared objects and created objects.

Created Objects: Defined as any object you created yourself.

Content

- Video
- Articles
- White Papers
- Blog Posts
- Fan Page Discussions
- First submission of an article
- Interesting Links Shared

Comments

- Idle
- Aggressive
- Humorous
- Antagonistic
- Linking back to your micro-blog

Knowing the content people are interested in is just as important as knowing which types of content are okay to curate. The corollary to that is knowing what type of personality you're

going to display socially. Some people act exactly the same online, and some people act completely different than they would in real person. I find it's best to find your voice and overcome the intimidation factor by just jumping in and swimming. You can't make a mistake — and even if you did, you're just starting out, so you don't have a large enough audience to do anything regrettable. Finally, let's focus on Facebook. I'm giving you a very specific Facebook Fan Page strategy as a way to help you get going. (I'm assuming here that you don't currently have a Fan Page or Community Page for Facebook.)

Facebook Fan Page Strategy

To Get Started:

Upload a logo or photo with a web address at the bottom. It won't be clickable, but fans can see where to go if they want to visit your website.

Fill out your info page completely. Here you can have a clickable web address, company overview, mission, and products. You can give only what Facebook asks for, or you can get creative and provide other information as well. For example, in your company overview, you can list links to pages on your website, your newsletter signup form, other social media, or whatever you want.

Use [FBML](#) to create a landing page. FBML is Facebook's version of HTML, which you can use with an application called Static FBML. This lets you render basic HTML in a box or tab on your page. You won't find it in your default applications, but you can find it with a search in the application directory.

The idea is that instead of sending people to your wall (as most people do), you send them to a landing page with whatever message you want to provide. For example, you can give a short description of your organization and tell people to click the “become a fan” button.

This is one of those “duh” things you may not think about at first, but which can dramatically increase your Facebook growth. A landing page is just good direct marketing.

Use your tabs wisely. If you think of a Facebook page as a secondary website for your business, you'll realize that the tabs at the top of the page are like site navigation. You can have a tab for your newsletter, a tab for donations, a tab for products, etc. How? With that nifty FBML application.

Don't forget the sidebar. Anything you can put in your tabs, you can also put in your sidebar. A newsletter signup form fits here nicely. So does a poll (another application you can add), affiliate banner, or set of links.

Post often. The same rules apply to Facebook as any other social media. It's all about content and interaction. Posting something every few weeks won't cut it. Post every day, or even several times a day to make sure you're showing up in your fans' news feeds. This can be links to your blog, product announcements, questions, news items, or anything your fans would be interested in.

Every time someone becomes a fan, comments, clicks the "like" link, or shares your post, it shows up in that fan's news feed for all their friends to see. So "viral" is built in.

Link to your page from everywhere. If you want fans, you have to let people know you're on Facebook. Put an icon or link in your newsletter, on your website or blog, in your email footer... everywhere.

Email and blog it. Don't be shy. Do an email blast driving subscribers to your fan page. Post a blog about what's happening on your fan page with an invitation to become a fan.

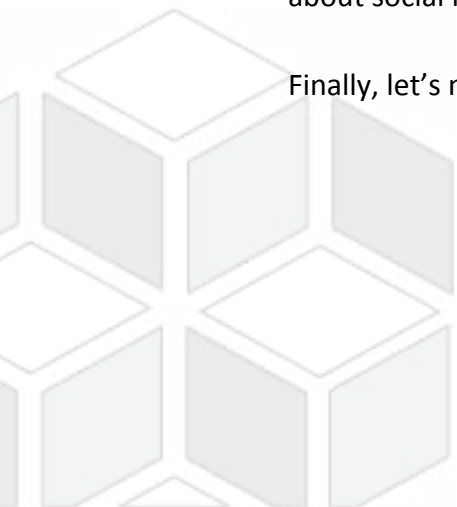
Send updates to your fans. This feature is a little like email. Don't abuse it, because Facebook fans aren't expecting (and don't want) an avalanche of messages from you. But used wisely, this handy feature lets you update fans about your products, sales, and events.

Subscribe to similar fan pages and groups. In social media it's all about community and participation. There aren't any gimmicks that work consistently. Make your gimmick being authentic, present and altruistic. It will always pay the bills.

I sincerely hope that you've received ample value from this write-up. If you have any questions or would like to get-in-deep and talk about the nitty-gritty, by all means, contact me. I'm interested in your success, because I believe that my success *only* comes when you're successful.

If you'd like help implementing any of the information discussed or just want to learn more about social media marketing, please visit www.socialmatica.com.

Finally, let's move on guide number three, which is generously entitled:



The Small-to-Medium-Sized Business Owners Guide to Social Media

If you're like most of the small- to medium-sized business owners I know (or if you work for one), you're looking for detailed, but action-packed information you can use right now. With that in mind, I'm going to promise not to waste your time with information that does not directly come from professional experience. Everything here is totally rooted in practical ideas that anyone (yes, you!) can put into play.

My root assumption is that you're reading this because you're tired of guessing when it comes to social media. I'm here to tell you that you don't have to anymore. That's so vitally important, and so what SocialMatica is all about, let me say it again:

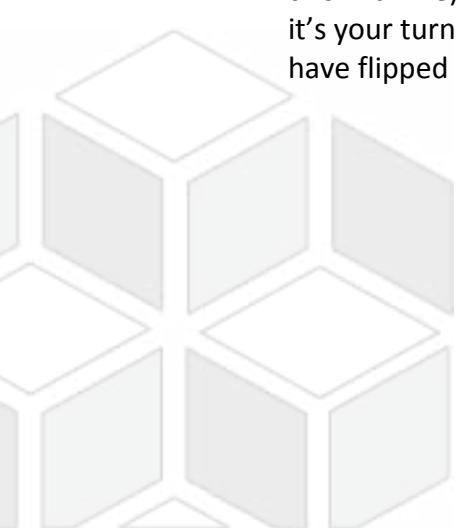
You don't have to guess any more.

Guessing sucks. It's for people who want the comfort of the rut of mediocrity that they're in. You don't, which is why you're reading this.

I've already talked about how to measure effectively. I've talked about how to get started dominating your social market. Now let's focus on some general how-to's concerning changes in the marketing playground.

I realize I've thrown a lot of information at you. Kudos to you! The fact that you've put in the work so far shows that you're serious; you're one of the people I WANT to reach, to work with, to share my methods with. You're ready to be a part of the exciting new frontier that social media offers... instead of a bystander, watching the parade go by.

Now it's time to sit down and let the ideas sink in, to really reflect on everything we've already talked about. Now you get to shift your mind to beta mode, which (and think about this with me) is like the cool glass of lemonade after a hot day's worth of lawn mowing. Now it's your turn to digest these ideas. Let's ruminate together about the nine concepts that have flipped marketing on its head...



PR is now Communication!

1. The days of being able to blast out messages and measure effectiveness simply by volume are gone. The marketing field is now the news field, and PR has become two-way communication. Organizations that insist on waging war on their own clients by dumping propaganda through television, print and digital ads are sadly going to suffer massive defeat.

Please understand that, as a brand, whether you're big or small, you *must* participate in a two-way dialogue to create a real relationship, even if it's only superficially-connected through digital interaction. The fact is, it's already happening. Look at United Breaks Guitars, if you need a further glaring example. *Ten million views...*and you know what else? The song is fun to listen to.



The intimidating thing about starting two-way dialogue is simply this: pride or fear about asking a question to an audience who isn't yet engaged. People refrain from even starting to ask questions because they're either deathly afraid no one's listening, or they arrogantly believe that *everyone* is listening.

Let me banish that fear, here and now, by offering a simple, fool-proof system to both the novice, and to the more experienced *social-media-ite* --- a new tool for their virtual toolbox. Here's a simple way to start. Call it a "snacklet" in the smorgasbord of good-eating ideas for getting a two-way dialogue started.

Example

Start a Facebook group that's exclusive to your customers. Pick a few of your strongest customers to join the group as an "invite-only" users group. Sounds easy? But before you run off to Facebook, brimming with confidence about this idea, let's think about a few things regarding this group, its charter, and what we're hoping to accomplish with it.

Step 1: Write a charter: A charter statement is nothing more than mission statement, or a theme to go along with your group. For instance: “A meeting place to discuss our customers’ common experience, good or bad, for the purposes of growth and achievement.”

Step 2: Outline Expectations for Conduct: It’s hard to imagine, but some people insist on pushing boundaries, and will need some basic guidelines for acceptable communication and conduct. It will only take a few moments and frankly it’s far better than hearing “I told you so” later.

Step 3: Brainstorm on Topics of Mutual Interest: Starting your group will be exciting, and watching people join will be like watching your investment in silver [funny] soar. But you will quickly lose momentum if you’re not engaging the minds of your customers with relevant questions or stories that will get them talking about you - -- or more importantly, their problems.

Step 4: Go! Go now...put down this paper, even though you just started. Work on this. Design it to suit you, and then send me an email letting me know you did. Don’t worry, all this valuable information will still be here when you’re done taking advantage of the opportunities that your competitors aren’t even thinking about.

A Practical Use

We all learn and solve problems differently. With that in mind, let me share with you an example from my professional history that will show --- *this is easy... and it really works!*

SocialMatica, Inc. was once a relatively new company looking for an edgy method to capitalize on fast-moving social media SaaS apps. We wanted to discover, define and refine a method for customer engagement that increased stickiness and fostered more and better interactions with the client.

We formed a “Clients-Only” support group at the start of every project, made up of the team members involved. Once the project was started, both SocialMatica and the client would record parking-lot questions exclusively on the Facebook support group. This communication extended beyond the scope and length of the project

Benefits: Free,
Instant Reminders,
Historical Threads,
No Sunset On Formal
Communication

Drawbacks: Social
media disguised as
productivity

It’s not hard to see
how customers and
companies alike will
flock to this method
and to me, what is
most striking is how
simple this idea is.

What was the payoff? It really opened up a two-way dialogue as a means to enhance and deepen the relationship. It didn't cost anything, and it took advantage of the activity that more than 50% of Americans are doing every day --- logging on to Facebook.

This is just one of the many use cases and examples of how PR has become two-way communication.

2. If You Had To Pick Three Influencers... Do You Know Whom Matters?

Clients matter, prospects matter; do competitors and influencers matter? Then the very next question is, out of all your clients, prospects, influencers and competitors, which of them matter relative to your next sale or conversion?

Without a breakdown of these categories, it's all guessing, most likely based on anecdote. For instance, the sales person says, "I've lost to XYZ three times last month! That must make them a competitor." But what he or she doesn't know is that is that last month was a fluke, totally based on your competitors' deliberate client boarding strategy. They gifted coupons to "BUY" customers, but in so doing, they took a total loss.

...What if you picked 10 [online] magazines and measured, by comparison, the traffic for each site?

While a business' intimate details are typically held close to the vest, their digital marketing strategy is not. The data resulting from their decisions is public, widely available and waiting to be measured. Once you understand how to find and measure that, making decisions about where to spend your marketing dollar suddenly become obvious --- so obvious that you'll wonder why you didn't think of it sooner.

What if I told you that you could tell which magazine to advertise in based on performance, and NOT readership? Readership is a lagging indicator, but performance is a LEADING indicator.

I want to invest in the marketing outlet that is performing best in digital and social marketing. Why? Because its performance is measured not by sales or readership, but by ENGAGEMENT! How much a brand is liked or followed has everything to do with how well they are received by their audience.

While this may seem obvious, the system of measurement is slightly more sophisticated, but not complicated. Trust me; once you understand the basics, everything falls into place. For instance, imagine that I had \$1,000 to invest this month in digital marketing. I have five media sales people telling me that their website, magazine or media outlet will produce "X" amount of traffic --- if I'd just place an ad with them. Do they guarantee it? Probably not. Why do they offer it then? Well, it's a calculated guess. They know *about* how much traffic their site gets, they know *about* how many impressions their banners give, and they know

about how many of those led to clicks, conversions, sales, follow-ups, etc., etc., etc. So, it's all a guess – albeit on your dollar.

However, what if picked ten magazines and measured, by comparison, the traffic for each site, how many search engine references their brand has, or the size of their digital audience, and social media activity?

Even if you don't know what all of those statistics are, obviously, you would only work with the highest performing ones, and the rest would be taken off the table immediately. And that's why having a measurement system that gives you an index of a company's digital and social performance is invaluable. You can compare and understand why, when, and where to invest your marketing dollar. **Why guess when you don't have to?** Remove anecdote and conjecture from the table, and only rely on empirical data.

The process I'm describing can be neatly tucked under the idea of "ranking" your customers, clients, publishers and influencers Social Media and Digital Marketing. Here are some metrics that you should track:

- **Traffic**
- **Facebook Likes**
- **Twitter Followers, Followed, Listed, Tweets**
- **LinkedIn Followers**
- **YouTube Subscribers**
- **Blog Posts/Comments**
- **Incoming Links**

Once you begin collecting this information, you'll soon realize a few things. First, it's difficult without the automatic methods already available...Second you'll realize who of your competitors is legitimate socially and digitally, and who is working on traditional, guessing, methods. And there you are --- competitive advantage!

You're now armed to make informed, empirically based judgments about what is going on in the market. This can't help but result in more efficient and wise investments, as well as provide that famous closed loop system for marketing efficacy.

The last element is, "What is an influencer?" Pragmatically, the language is rather obvious -- - but what might not be obvious is how someone would, could or should influence me online.

The subject of influence online is in hot debate, but is mostly framed wrong. The proponents of each side are more concerned with how it can be monetized ethically, or whether or not it can be measured. But the simple truth is that influence is real, and

monetization comes when value is beset by efficiency. So, it makes sense that influence is real and its monetization is simply a matter of time so why bother with that debate? The bigger question is, do you know how to measure influence? If you could, would it be useful to your company? If you've not thought about this before, I understand. Let me give you a quick, crash course...

An **influencer** is any social identity that modifies the perception of buyers. Influencers do not have to *intend* to be influencers. They are simply messengers who represent a position -- forcefully or un-forcefully --- but effectively. Knowing who these identities are for your vertical, or even among your competitors, helps us understand how to take advantage of the opportunities for things like, blogger outreach, secondary advertising, testimonials and customer reviews.

So if you had to pick three of your biggest influencers, would you know who they are? Which social network do they have the most influence in? Twitter, Facebook, YouTube? How big is their audience?

3. Where Digital Rivers Flow

Many people get up and approach their day as simply as a list of to-do's. Once completed, they will be able to return from whence they came with the earnest expectation of returning once again for the next repetition.

I trust that since you're reading this, you're not one of those people. I lead with that because I'm going to ask you to think past the common framework of to-do's and learned, familiar patterns. I want you think a little more abstractly.

As stated earlier, what we measure online (namely social & digital media performance) is completely representative of the intentions and actualization of the ideas of the social identities that we're measuring. **Stated simply, we know what they are doing by what they have done.** This has a couple of practical implications that should be very exciting for you.

I love trends. My mind immediately picks up on them, and my senses are so tuned that I'll even notice if I write a word too often, and I'll wonder why that is.

Be that as it may, the Digital River that I want you to walk beside are the measurements that we talked about in point number one. The first practical effect this has on you is that you can see how active your vertical space is.

Imagine for a moment that you could compare, side-by-side, all the metrics listed above for every competitor, customers, publisher and partner that you work with. What would you see first? You'd see an over-arching trend of your entire space. You'd see how social people

were, how much their content gets repeated; if you consistency tracked this data over time, you see what's growing and what's shrinking.

The second practical effect is, why is all of this happening? Again, you can know what people are doing by measuring what they've done. Imagine that you registered for your competitor's lead nurturing program and then tracked their social activity and traffic --- and at the same time you correlated spikes to the release of their lead nurturing emails or mailers... What would that tell you?

It would tell you how effective their messaging was. Not only that, but as time goes on you would begin to see that their customers only seem to respond to massive discounts, or offers of prizes. How valuable would that be to you as a marketing person or a small business owner?

We can use this information to interpret how well we're navigating our customers' needs by assessing how effective we are, our competitors are, the vertical is in general.

Here's the question on everyone's mind: Should I do social media or not? (You can substitute "social media" for Twitter, Facebook, blogging, YouTube, or any other type of digital activity.) I see so many that are quick to tell you *how* to do these activities, but reluctant to help you figure out *whether you* should.

That's the point of these measurements. They are more than telling you whether or not you're doing it well; their transcendent value is helping you decide if you should or not. Competitive intelligence much more than just knowing inside stock tips, or the latest PR release. It's also being able to analyze the conversations that are occurring right now between:

- **Prospects**
- **Your Clients**
- **Digital Influencers**
- **Your Competitors**

These conversations are taking place on vendor-led communities, thought leadership blogs, Twitterverse, Facebook and forums around the Net. You must be able to put a stethoscope on those conversations and visualize what's being said. If your company is not large enough or well known enough for conversations to already be taking place, then the question of "What are they talking about?" becomes "Where are the conversations that I'm interested in taking place?" At this point the strategy becomes creating the conversation, and then attracting the right type of people to the conversations that you're facilitating.

Benefits: Instantly focus your time on higher performing companies, Efficient, Discernment Leading To Market Timing Above we talked about what metrics you should track. Now let's consider how they interact with each other.

4. Who's the Leader, and Who's Effective?

Since this whole concept is new to most of us, I want to start with a few questions to ponder.

First, what would it mean to you that the search engine mentions of a brand grew 25% this month, and then next month their traffic grew by 10%? Would you see a correlation?

Certainly that's worth knowing. This is the fundamental issue of measurement. Somebody's got to be the leader, since we're ranking the people we're measuring. But leading a category isn't necessarily *out-performing* anyone. After all, we expect an older site to have more traffic than a newer one, or a media site more traffic than an informational site. That doesn't mean they're making the big bucks.

These are perfectly legitimate biases when it comes to making distinctions; we have to learn how to properly bias the data so that the statistics don't lead us in a false direction, or to a false conclusion.

When measuring effectiveness, keep this simple rule in mind: It's not what you know, it's what you can prove. What this means in practice is that the *trends* define what's really going on, not any single data point in time.



Traffic – Traffic is somewhat of an instant measure of effectiveness, since people have to be motivated to come to your site in the first place. The very interesting thought becomes correlating competitors' traffic spikes relative to their lead-nurturing campaigns --- and especially relative to the next statistic.

Search Engine Mentions – The total number of mentions of a brand in any point in time is a measurement of the density of their brand name; which is a lagging indicator of effectiveness, but can be a leading indicator of activity. Here's how:

Imagine that you baseline the brand Costco as 301k mentions in June, then again in July when the mentions increase to 500k... 600k in August... 850k in September. If you laid that over traffic and you saw similar spikes, what does that tell you?



You instantly know that one of two things IS happening. Either, their marketing campaign is so effective that people are blogging, tweeting and talking about that brand... or they are building links via a digital marketing strategy. In either case, if you saw traffic spikes that seemed to correlate to the spikes in mentions, you know that whatever they're doing, they're doing it right. How? We know that mentions don't "just happen." Someone must create the brand mention in order for a search engine to index it. SO, the appearance of new mentions means that someone is creating them.

The beauty of knowing this is only surpassed by the joy of having a closed loop marketing efficacy program. As if that weren't good enough, we're going to go further...

Social Activity Volume – Imagine you added up all the likes, subscribers, followers and tweets in a numeric count, tracked your entire vertical, and laid them out congruently. One of the first things you would see is the composite leader(s) across all the social networks. Next, you would see benchmarks for success. Assuming you aren't the leader, that shows you a clear stair-step to the top. Then it's up to you to decide if putting in the effort to be leader is either achievable or necessary.



The last thing that is obvious is how social the space in general is. How expensive would it be to become social in the first place? This point answers questions that we may not be asking, but definitely should be. For instance, should we even have a Twitter channel? Well, if no one (including customers and partners) had one, I think you could summarily dismiss Twitter as useless (for you) without further debate. The beauty here is, that the dismissal is based on data, and not conjecture. Cool right? But there's more...

- A few of the competitors were faking, building it, hoping people would come
- One competitor had solid engagement
- The rest had followers but no real engagement or two-way dialogue

5. How Does One Derive Their Rank?

A minor point, but tactically it makes sense to understand how the Client, Prospect, Influencer and Competitor list derives its power. The macro view is that you can identify the most effective channel for an entire vertical --- superlatively important for someone thinking about entering it. But you can also see the intersection of leverage and opportunity simply by understanding where the strongest channels for a brand are.



A Practical Use

Imagine that you've successfully tracked the social profiles for all the competitors in your space and you begin to see a trend. The most successful companies (as measured by traffic) also seem to have the highest-performing Facebook statistics. What would that mean to you? What would you do with that information?

I was on a project where that actually happened. The client was in the financial services sector and had a large customer base of small- to medium-sized businesses. The company needed to understand where their competitors were having the biggest impact, on which network and if possible, why. We had to do more than just count the number of likes; we also had to look at the space as a whole, as well as dig into the types of interactions that were happening on each of the profiles sites.

What we discovered:

What it meant

The strength of the channel is in the opportunity stage for our client. Only one real social competitor emerged based on our analysis. We were able to improve our client's approach with the best ideas from the vertical and what we inferred from the leading competitors approach. It turns out that the industry responded much better to offers for advice and learning than they did for free iPods and giveaways that weren't central to learning more about the company's business.

We wouldn't have known this just by tracking the number of likes and followers, but it is a conclusion that is easily reached and only produced through the trending analysis of likes and followers, followed by analysis of the engagement.

6. Putting It Together Into A Single Program

So far we've talked about how marketing is now a two-way communication. We've talked about how to measure success, what influencers are, whether we should enter social media, how to interpret data and we've given that data some context by talking about defining the strongest channel. The last three areas to be discussed are opportunities, areas to avoid and execution strategies.

Before we can get there though let's briefly cover what putting it all together looks like...

More terms to consider:

Social Data Gathering – This is the data collection process. Since we're leading to creating an effective digital marketing program and we're going to do that through measurement, we need to collect the data that will show that.

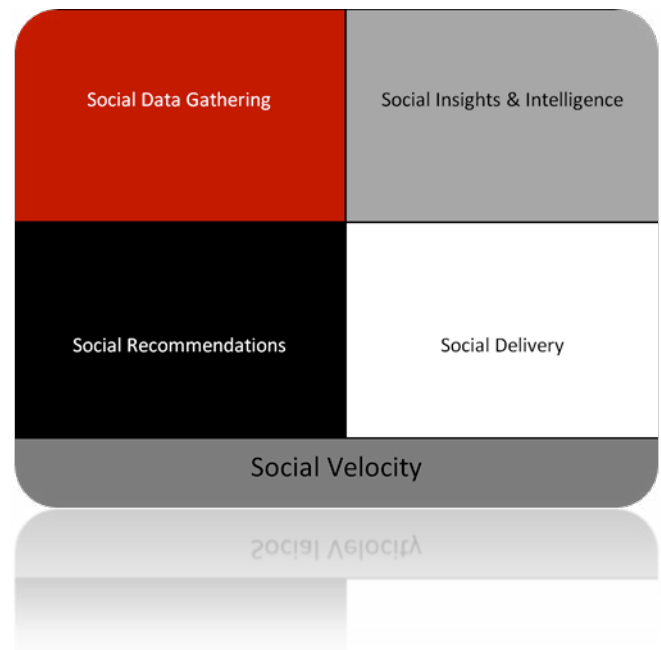
Social Insights & Intelligence – This is where we crunch the numbers and make the chocolate. Some of the insights are obvious, some of them require training... but all of them can come by staring at the data long enough.

Social Recommendations – Here we're looking for changes to our marketing program that come from the data. That's the most important element. Yeah, that's what I said; the recommendation is not the most important part. It's the fact that is based on data.

Social Delivery – This is the execution, and it begs the how, when and where.

Social Velocity – This is the bedrock upon which this method is based. Without a volume of social velocity, or enough events going on in digital marketing or social media, there's technically nothing or not enough to measure. Its presence in the diagram is telling us that we need to have enough volume, called velocity for our purposes, to be able to make the inferences that come out of these measurements.

Consider the table below as to how to implement this program:



Time Line	Phase	Activity
Day 0-30	Social Data Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List Top 10 Online Competitors • Collect Social Statistics for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube & LinkedIn • Collect Traffic • Collect Inbound Links • Collect Search Engine Mentions Of The Brands
Day 31-60	Social Insights & Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Does Traffic and Mentions Seem To Relate? • Which Is The Highest Performing Social Network? • Who Has The Most Inbound Links? • How Does That Relate To Mentions • Etc.
Day 60-90	Social Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay All Observations Over Internal Conversion, or Lead To Close Ratio Data...What Does It Tell You?
Day 90-180	Social Delivery	Buy or Build

Functionally, the most important factor (aside from generating engagements and conversions) is having an accurate picture of what your competition is doing in their marketing. Their digital footprint matters to your clients and prospects --- it should *really* matter to you! Do you know the Twitter handle of your top ten competitors, who's engaged with their handle, what the latest Tweet was? Why not? All that information is free!

7. Where Are The Opportunities?

As a marketing person who has sat through literally hundreds of meetings where I've revealed this process to new ears, if nothing else, I've learned this: opportunities are contextual.

That has two meanings; first and foremost, the opportunities become obvious the more you look at the data. Second, they are different for each company. The opportunities you will see will be based on your biases, goals, budget and analytical nature. As a Chief Marketing Officer, or Marketing Executive, creating a conversion that leads to a sale is the highest point of success for your team. But in practical terms the more likely successes are email subscriptions, poll participation, likes, followers and things like that.

The opportunities that exist have more to do with seizing the moment at which data points merge into a complete picture before your competition does. The opportunity really exists

to be ahead of everyone else --- and we know how to grab it. You can certainly continue your guess marketing if you want... but why not capitalize on the groundwork already been laid by your competition?

Given that, let's look at the two highest macro points in marketing that I can come up with, which are: Branding and Conversion.

Branding Opportunities:

Looking at the data will help you decide which places are the best for branding. High traffic with a low number of mentions would tell me that the content on that site is not being repeated --- people don't pass it around. So while people are interested in coming to the site, they may (or may not) consume the content themselves, but they're not moved to share it.

A site that causes me to curate a link to Facebook has given me the value of 1) giving me information; and 2) giving me the opportunity to educate others, versus a site that gives me a coupon that's only good for me.

Conversion Opportunities:

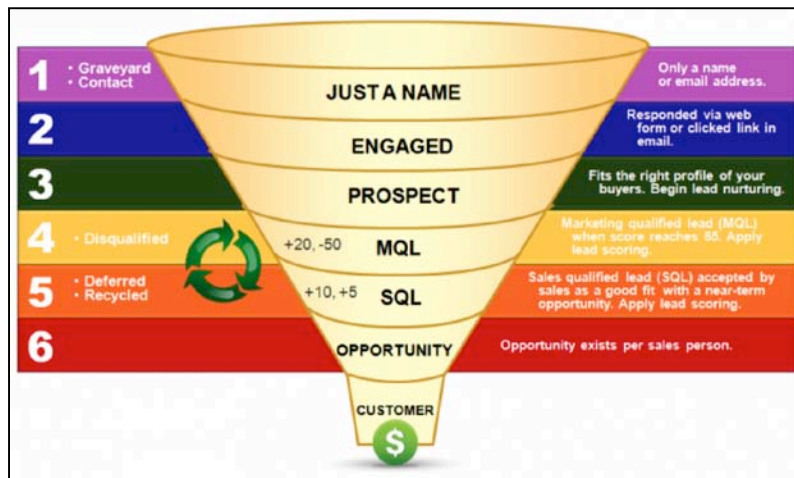
In reality, this is just the inversion of branding. Whatever isn't branding is likely worthy of being an opportunity to look for conversion.

Let's define a conversion as an event that either is, or leads to a close and new revenue being booked. That is, when someone trades their email for a download, that's a conversion event. We often think about conversions in terms of a sale, but this is hardly accurate. While this topic is not covered in depth here, I'd like to spend just a few words explaining what an MQFL or MQL is.



Marketing Qualified Funnel Lead (MQFL)

¹A sale is a process of qualification. Every stage represents an opportunity to qualify the



prospect even further, and in so doing you qualify them out of your funnel, or to a close.

Marketing is no different, except that having literal conversations is unusual. The marketing person must interpret *activity* as the conversation or voice of the prospect, and have pre-defined set of activities that generally lead to sales. As

more activities are engaged in, the probability of close increases and the likelihood of a sale grows. These activities are called 'Conversion-Events'. The more conversion-events a MQL has, the more likely it is to convert into new revenue.

The key takeaway here is, think about how to develop your MQL conversion events and give yourself a funnel to develop digital leads from.

A Practical Use

A customer of mine operates a mommy-blogger website that sells homemade jewelry. They have all types of corporate sponsorships and branding, and they are a fully operational eCommerce store. However, when I first started working with them, they didn't have any sense of how to qualify their prospects. They knew they had sales, traffic and emails to market to people with, but there was no systematic approach to a) interpret social and digital data, and b) funnel management.

What We Did:

First, we instituted a funnel process. We sat down and talked through all the typical buying stages of their customer. Remarkably, it wasn't hard for them to enumerate the steps that a typical buyer goes through, but it was very difficult for them to describe why someone *doesn't* buy, or what activities the non-buyer engages in. This of course leads to guessing,

¹ Graphic courtesy of leadliaison.com <http://www.leadliaison.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/diagram-of-sales-pipeline-stages-e1302556813916.png>

and when you're working with people you can't directly interface with, guessing seems like adding insult to injury.

Once we instituted the MQL process, something magical happened. They suddenly became more efficient and adept marketers. Why? Because they were working with real data, in a real system that could be tested and measured.

I could write a book on MQL, and the process in general, but as invaluable as it is, we've got more ground to cover. If you'd like to know about it, pose a question on my Facebook Fan Page at [Facebook.com/DeconstructingTheArgument](https://www.facebook.com/DeconstructingTheArgument), and I'll be glad to share this must-have for your marketing arsenal.

8. Areas to Avoid

It's best for me to share brief word of caution: Hopefully, everything I've talked about here is thrilling and inspires you to action. However, be aware that your exuberance may not automatically translate to receptivity.

Take the time to figure out *why* your current customers or prospects would want to hear from you. Trust me; you have something they need, even if it's only knowledge for now. Once you've discovered that, build your process around succinctly delivering that product to them for free. DO NOT coerce or over-stimulate your digital communities, whether through Facebook, Twitter, or blogging.

You must engage them in a way that enriches *them*, not promotes you. Don't constantly give away iPods (or anything for that matter) in order to earn a friend. Find a way to give back to them with social credibility-building activities, and they will engage. Also, don't jump around between social media channels. Pick one, and then stick with it. Respect your audience by giving them a voice, but don't overcompensate by elevating people who haven't earned their place through spending time with the community. Don't be fake or contrived. People are constantly on the lookout for the scam artist or Johnny-come-lately. Frauds always make the biggest news, and you don't easily shake that stigma.

9. Tactical Execution of Your Team

The fundamentals of true execution are built around cheap resources providing the highest possible return. This is why we say; hire a team of part-time bloggers and writers to help you generate your content. Assuming you're able to provide value to your clients through your services, making them aware of what you do is your most important step. For \$400 a week, you can generate 40 new blog posts, summary articles, Tweets and status updates that include your brand, your awareness and help build SEO rank. It's cheap

and it's effective. In today's economy, people will dive at opportunities to expand their range. As long as you have sufficient metrics and tools in place to measure your effectiveness, you'll be able to tactically execute with a very small budget and return great results.

If you'd like to learn more about marketing or marketing performance (and believe me, there's lots more to know), you can contact me directly at joshua@socialmatica.com, or by leaving a note on my personal fan page. Facebook.com/DeconstructingTheArgument.

Also, if you'd like to subscribe to our blog you can do so at www.socialmatica.com

For our final installment in this compendium of social media marketing performance, I'd like to introduce to you:

Digital Marketing Transcendence

4 Ways To Prepare For The Convergence Of Digital And Actual Reality

As someone who's right beside you in this journey of harnessing the power of social media for your business, I want to give you some practical applications. I want to show you some new realities that could really get the ball rolling in your mind on how to make use of this data. Rest assured, social media isn't a fad. It's an international communications infrastructure, and the sooner we learn how to read the tea leaves, the sooner we'll know which lever to pull to do what. This could be appropriately titled, "Putting It All Together."

Apart from all the benefits of making use of social media that we've talked about thus far, there are some benefits that you can take inwardly to your company as well. As someone who cares about giving you an unfair advantage today, let's just talk about the little nuances, or the previously unseen benefits for your business. But first, a story...

Several years ago a movie came out (it was terrible, by the way) called "The Lawnmower Man." The essential plot line was that virtual reality was a technology that would completely melt your mind into a transcendent new reality. We're in a similar, interesting position with regard to social media because in many ways we have set our foot on the precipice of a similar outcome.

When you ask people to define reality, you can really gauge their sensibilities. You'll get answers from "Duh – why are you asking?" to the ultra-transcendent "There is no reality, just a multitude of perceived actualities." Straddling those two opinions is the position of reality being defined as *"What you know, and what you can prove."*

There's a looming possibility that we're very near the event horizon of digital transcendence, where our reality as we understand it is heavily influenced, if not decided, by what happens online. In fact, there are all sorts of public and private communities where entire ecosystems of thought, social trends, sayings and socio-economic statuses are created.

What makes this separate from the reality that we've known? It doesn't exist in common conversation, and most importantly, it's permanent for all intents and purposes. Have you ever heard of a meme? Or you ever wondered why there are so many funny pictures of cats on the Internet, or what "planking" is? These are all socially developed Internet fads.

This has many sweeping implications, but for your benefit we're going to focus on the opportunities that this creates for the average small- to medium-business. This information is equally useful to those who are creating a personal brand or may have a sole proprietorship built around digital and social media.

Research:

Remember books and libraries? Believe it or not, they still exist --- but there is an entirely new library of false and true information called the Internet. While I think some of what's to follow may be somewhat obvious if you think about it, it seems appropriate to give some definition to the ideas, if only to give them legitimacy.

When it comes to research, competitive intelligence is one of the first things that we can employ to impact our bottom line.

Competitive Intelligence:

Competitors clearly are the number one item to research. The question becomes, what can I look at that I'll actually find useful?

First, let's be clear: I'm not talking about hijacking private intellectual property. I'm simply talking about leveraging what people do online as a means to interpret their motivations. If you can understand their motivations, you can predict how they will act.

Thus, social and digital media becomes the very cornerstone of our cathedral. Here are a few things to look at. (I've also defined what they tell you about your competitors.)

Social Media Networks:

- Which networks are your competitors, partners, publishers, etc. in?
 - Twitter
 - YouTube

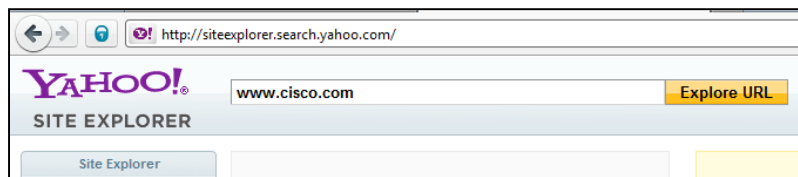
- Facebook
- None at All

If you added up all the likes, followers and subscribers, etc. and compared them, who's leading the pack? Who's in the middle, and who's at the bottom? Here are a couple of questions to help you think about interpreting that information:

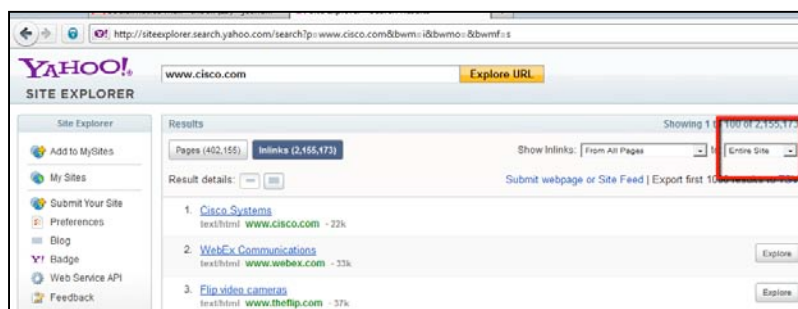
- Are there any surprises?
- Based on what you know of each of these competitors, who's most out of place?
- Does the overall space seem active or inactive, based on this data?

Incoming Links

I personally like using Yahoo Site Explorer, though it can be a little tricky to do it just right. Here's an example: go to <http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com>



Once you click Explore URL, there are really only two more steps to make sure you have the correct numbers for all of your competitors.



Click "InLinks." Then make sure you select "Entire Site" from the drop down to the right of the page.

Once you've collected the number of InLinks (sometimes called backlinks) for all of your competitors, think about these questions:

- Are there surprises?
- Month-over-month, who's growing the most and by what percentage?
- Is there a correlation between social activity and InLinks?

InLinks are a good sign of engagement for established sites, but they can also be a sign of an SEO campaign underway, where companies are building links with the search engines in order to build up their rank and get more traffic for keywords. The good news is that we can infer with a strong likelihood, which is which just by looking at the next statistic.

Traffic:

Traffic is our first trailing statistic of effectiveness and leading statistic of performance. When I look at a site's traffic numbers, I ask:

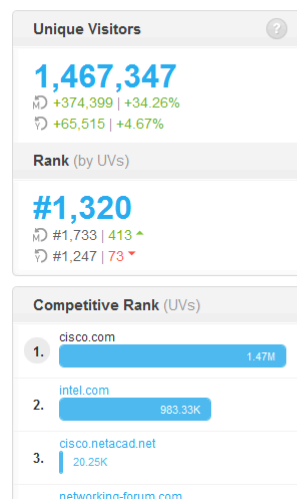
- Is this consistent?
- How does this relate to the marketing campaigns they have running, relative to timing?
- How does this correlate to InLinks and social media activity?
- What's the bounce rate and how does it affect the results?

Figure 1 Compete.com
Data on Cisco.com

Those questions are relevant because when someone visits your site, they are there because:

- They mistyped the page
- They are responding to a campaign
- They found it through a search engine reference
- They heard about it from a friend

July 2011 / U.S. Data Only



While all the statistics that I want cannot be found using research, looking at the data holistically can give us a lot of insights that we would not necessarily have otherwise. For example, if a site is consistently hitting 10k visitors, but their social media activity and InLinks are exploding, I would conclude a few things:

- What they are doing might not be working
- They might be buying likes and building links
- It may not have paid off yet, so keep watching

You can repeat this same process for your customers, publishers, distributors or anyone in your vertical that's a service provider in the industry. From a marketing perspective this can really enhance our sorting process when it comes to making marketing investment decisions.

Due Diligence:

When it comes to vetting companies out, there is a very real method using social and digital media for making as certain as is possible that they are legitimate. A method like this has sweeping implications, some of which I will cover here. But first, let me share an anecdote with you to set up the possibilities.

I have a friend who was involved in a project where his client was trying to put his past behind him. The friend was in jail for a crime he didn't commit, but while incarcerated he'd written several books and become somewhat of a local celebrity. He was being approached for several Internet marketing opportunities, and while he had created a new image through his prison experience, the old one wouldn't die. The result was that anyone Googling his name would immediately be taken to all the negative press stories that surrounded his trial, as well as the secondary conversations swirling about throughout local forums and chat communities. In order to get a new start and be able to work with the new business opportunity, he had to find a way to stem the tide of negative publicity.

The project was an attempt to counteract the bad press and publish a substantive portion of good information about the accused so that anyone doing research would get more than the negative news stories. Imagine trying to evaluate a person, business partner or employee, and only finding negative information about the subject, would that influence you? If we're honest, everything we do influences us.

I use this anecdote to demonstrate two things. First, don't believe everything you read; and second, don't believe everything you read. The news out there could be disinformation, or it could be substantive and legitimate. The good news for those of us who are using social and digital media as a research check point, there are ways of knowing whether or not to trust it.

Here are a couple of methods:

WhoIS records: A WhoIS record look-up is simply checking with the Domain Authority of a particular website to see who registered the site and when. Correlating this data with the relative questions in mind should help you decide whether or not what's being said could possibly be real. For instance, I recently joined a network marketing company whose pitch just seemed too good to be true. Here what I did to vet them out.

- Search the BBB Online
- WhoIS LookUp – if this reveals the site was started six months ago and the company says they've been doing business online for two years, we may have a problem to investigate
- Check search engine references for their Brand Name and Scam, Lawsuit, Fraud on;
 - YouTube
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Google
- Search secondary references and testimonials the same way (we're just looking for inconsistencies)

Once I completed all of that, I actually called up one of the people who claimed to be a member of the network marketing company not as an employee, but as my final litmus test. Then I bought, and I have been a very satisfied member.

Human Resources

A number of companies are turning to social and digital media for background checks and character references. The interesting thing about people is that they act completely like themselves when they think no one is looking. While an enhancement in privacy is occurring in the entire social network scene, that's not the point. We're looking for information that should be private, but is being made public; that's the insight into the character of the person.



Figure 2, Used With Permission

As business owners we're not interested in policing the personal lives of your employees; we're just looking for some low-hanging fruit that gives us an obvious impression that the person in question isn't too concerned with personal privacy or how they represent themselves.

Why does this matter? Well, apart from some of the obvious implications, employees are increasingly social and vocal about their professions. This means that they carry your brand as a reference; not only in everything they do secondarily, but also in anything they might say about your company primarily. This reality is both useful and potentially harmful to the small business owner. You should give some thought to instituting a social media policy that discusses these matters.

Resume Due Diligence:

I've never seen a fake resume (that I know of). But I'm sure they exist. Social and digital media make it increasingly possible to validate experience and working relationships. The labor laws prevent hiring managers and HR professionals from asking certain questions, but they do not prevent them from looking up a few friends out of the blue and calling them for a reference.

In today's economy, employers need the best of the best, and they are in the position to demand it since at this point there are so many who are available for work. All the more reason to leverage the social media networks to find out more information.

Here are a couple of examples concerning the references they list:

- Are they Facebook friends as well?
- Do they have any mutual friends?
- Are there three random Facebook friends you can call to get a reference?

Are there any obvious references to their name on:

- Google
- YouTube

Now, even as I offer this I realize that some of us may believe that this is far too much effort or too invasive. First, the information is public, and second, people lie. My point isn't to create a Big Brother, but rather to help us become a little more knowledgeable about a potential employee. If you're a business owner you

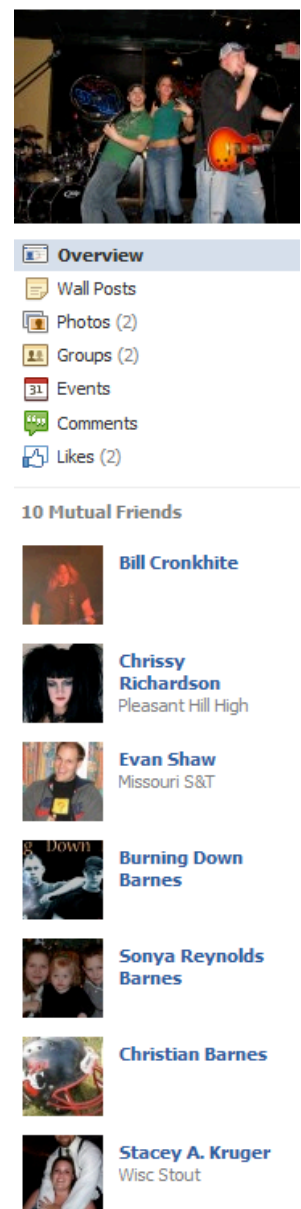


Figure 3 Friends of Friends

probably want a stable employee who is well liked and respected, not one who just interviews well.

Most of what I'm covering here falls under the major heading of research, but there are many uses once we understand how people and the data fit together. I'll develop that very thought in the next section...

Marketing & Sales:

There is an abundance of online communities that are alive, well, and defining our generation. If there is one medium that companies, especially smaller companies, do not exploit, it's that of online communities.

Here are some examples of online communities. Bear in mind that these communities have their own rules, ethics or code-of-conduct. If you're going to interact in the community (and I think you should), you'll need to learn the CoC in order to be received well. Here they are:

Specific Sites:

- Reddit
- SlashDot
- Digg
- StumbleUpon

General Types of Sites:

- Product Review Sites In General, IE: Experts-Exchange
- Forums Around A Product IE: CakeWalk User Community
- News & Learning Sites & User Groups: Slashdot

Have you ever thought about looking for communities and sub-communities to understand what people are talking about concerning a product or service? What people immediately do when they discover these communities is sell. **WRONG MOVE!**

The reason is not because your product isn't needed, or that somehow side-stepping the "earning-your-stripes" process is frowned upon, but because people are people, whether online or in real life. So when you come strutting in somewhere where no one knows you and immediately begin hawking your product, you're automatically rejected. Your product could cure cancer and it wouldn't matter.

Find review and opinion sites, discussion forums and the like and invest the time it takes to be part of that community. When you do that, opportunities will emerge naturally that will

give you the opportunity to market. Also, if you use the medium as a means to educate people about a specific problem (provided you do it well), they will be automatically more inclined to listen to you about other things as well.

Companies who are prepared for this digital conversion experience, whether or not they are e-commerce-driven, are more likely to survive the next phase of our social and digital evolution. Likewise, companies who are not able to interpret what's going on will be totally buried in the future of the digital age. They will be relegated to word-of-mouth marketing and cash transactions, like a local hardware store.

This is why getting familiar with and participating in these communities and the people who run them should be high on your list online activities. Instead of reading email or making calls, maybe it's time to get to know the people who make these communities strong and influential. These communities, this digital age is no longer only for the technically inclined. It is rapidly becoming the new reality and the new mediums by which ideas are exchanged, debated and communicated. Once again:

- LinkedIn is the HR hangout with a few thought leadership patterns
- Twitter is the new texting
- Facebook is the new family picnic
- YouTube is the new television, only it's two way
- Google is the new bus driver who gives me the ability to go places, but also to establish my own brand identity
- Blogging is the new convenience store of ideas

The brilliance of all of this is how people interact with it and assimilate it into their daily lives and regimen. It could be said that Social Media helped topple the Egyptian government...that's why they shut it down. It's that powerful, and for those of us who are ready, we'll be able to use it for opportunities instead of letting reality being defined for us, by someone else.

The last portion of this is directed at the opportunities that social media presents SaaS-based start-ups and small companies.

SaaS Startups:

A really neat feature of Facebook is their public and private groups function. The only real limitation (if you can call it that) is that in order to have people join the group, they have to be Facebook users and they have to be friends of the social identity --- that is, hosting the group. However, this is not really an impediment nearly as much as it is an opportunity to enhance communication between partners and customers.

All sorts of companies are creating paid, subscription-based communities that are meant to enhance communication among people who share employment, but perhaps not the same workspaces. I can personally attest to the usefulness of this mechanism for collaboration, project management and persistent communication. It's essential email with a thread that everyone can see, but with the ability to add documents, pictures, and ask polling questions.

Facebook Groups:

Starting the group is easy, and inviting people to it is equally simple.

Imagine that you launch an "enhanced-customer-experience" group and invite your very best customers to it. In joining, they have instant, digital access to chat and can post their thoughts to a private space. There's something about the visual representation of a feed as opposed to an email... Perhaps it's the fact that it's not easily overlooked. But whatever the case, being able to use the support group as a means of handling customer communication enhances and deepens the relationship with that customer. It also doesn't cost anything --- and for a startup, that's huge.

Twitter, Hash-Tags and Lists:

If all of your associates, business partners and customers are on Twitter, there are several interesting things that you can do to enhance communication.

Create a "Company Support HashTag:"

Consider creating a #MyCompanySupportHashTag and subscribing to it. This way you can provide premium support services with higher SLA's without costing any additional money. For example, any company that Tweets their problem to this hash-tag will be moved to the front of the line. This is a great way to have the customers pay for premium support, or to increase their social and digital engagement with your brand. This becomes a major point of difference between you and your competitors --- and again, it doesn't cost anything.

Create a Twitter List:

What if you created a Twitter list of all of your customers' content and then fed that to Paper.li on their behalf? Paper.li turns Twitter, Facebook and RSS feeds into online newspapers in just a few clicks. The result is that you can treat your readers to fresh news, all generated from your customers. The beauty is, here again, it doesn't cost anything and you're teaching your customers and prospects to engage with you digitally and socially. This is training them to accept a future marketing program that will leverage these same strategies to hear your marketing message. My old saying is that an educated prospect is a likely buyer. If you provided the education, they are statistically more likely to buy from you.

A Public Community:

While Facebook and Twitter both offer opportunities to create micro-communities, there are actual companies out there who offer communities free of charge, if you fit certain requirements. For example, SocialCast.com.



SocialCast offers the ability to interact with partners, customers and prospects on unprecedented levels. We have the unique ability to illicit feedback, and thereby build a user group and a knowledge base concerning our product and services. Once again --- you guessed it -- the real beauty is that you can start this up for free.

LinkedIn Group as a Knowledge Base:

Similar to SocialCast, LinkedIn has a public groups option that can be started and administered by anyone. You can ask questions and start dialogues with anyone on LinkedIn. Probably the neatest part of this is that the search engines can index it. As a result, not only are you marketing your company, but also common questions and experiences that help new customers buy. Need I say that having these kinds of tools at the disposal of a startup mentality only leads to one conclusion: "I wish there were 26 hours in a day!"

As a final conclusion, let me lay out of couple of general rules about social media and social media marketing performance.

First, Social Media;

1. Social media is just like real life --- all the same rules will eventually apply, so use wisdom and prudence
2. People are people everywhere; treat them like you'd treat a client
3. Communities are about ideas that people are interested in; find your idea and build your community around it
4. Be consistent
5. Don't worry what people think because your friends already know, and your enemies don't care
6. Finally, don't guess. Maybe that should be the first rule...

Now, Social Media Marketing Performance

1. Don't guess (now, doesn't that seem better?)
2. Gather, Analyze, Recommend, Implement, Repeat
3. Try to separate hype from empirical measurement; don't get involved because it's the latest, greatest; get involved for empirical reasons
4. Be consistent

5. Address what your customers think and care about, because they matter now and they get a vote on how long you stay in business. If you ask them, they will tell you everything you need to know.

I've appreciated being your tour-guide, your Social Media Sherpa, and I sincerely hope this guide has enriched you. Please don't hesitate to contact me at joshua@socialmatica.com or by leaving me a message at facebook.com/DeconstructingTheArgument, or by subscribing to our blog at www.socialmatica.com

Safe Travels; you are an expert now, armed with an unfair advantage!

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