

Chapter 5: Maximizing Stratified Social Communities

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Social networking communities, like other marketing outlets, can be sliced and diced many ways. They can be sorted vertically by industry or horizontally by demographics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, or income. By doing a little research, you can *stratify* (classify) them according to other commonly used marketing segmentation parameters such as geographical location, life stage (student, young married, family with kids, empty nester, retired), or psychographics (beliefs or behaviors).

In this chapter, we discuss how you can find these smaller, niche sites and how you can get value out of them.

Becoming a Big Fish in a Small Pond

These stratified sites may have much smaller audiences than sites such as Facebook and MySpace. However, if you choose correctly, the users of these sites will closely resemble the profile of your typical client or customer, making them better prospects. Consider the difference between advertising at the Super Bowl versus distributing a flyer at a local high school football game. It all depends where your audience is.

Your business can also make a much bigger splash on smaller sites. Frankly, it's so difficult to gain visibility and traction on a large social networking site that you almost need a marketing campaign just for that purpose (for instance, to acquire 2,000 friends on MySpace).

On a smaller site, your business becomes a big fish in a small pond, quickly establishing itself as an expert resource or a source of great products or services.

The use of social media by business — blogs, social networks, social bookmarks, and news aggregators — is already in transition from trial stage to strategic implementation.

This statement is confirmed by spending patterns: A 2009 CMO Survey found that businesses already spend 3.5 percent of their marketing budgets on social media marketing, with that figure predicted to grow to 6.1 percent by 2010 and to 13.7 percent by 2014. To maintain your market share, you need to decide how you will communicate just as effectively across numerous platforms. Fortunately, all it takes is time.

Taking Networking to the Next Level

From your own experience, you know the importance of offline networking to find vendors, employees, and customers. From tip networks to trade associations, networking is a mantra for business owners. Social media marketing is, first and foremost, a method of networking online.

Business connection sites have proliferated in the past several years. These sites are generally appropriate for soft selling, not for hard-core marketing. Though referrals are used primarily for making business-to-business (B2B) connections, especially when targeting those with a specific job title, you never know when a referral will bring you a customer.



Make a habit of including a link to your primary Web site on every profile and using some of your preferred search terms within your profile title and text. These techniques increase your inbound links and may help with search engine ranking.

Table 5-1 lists cross-industry directories. Visit the ones that seem appropriate, using the tactics described in Book VII, Chapter 1 to make your selections:

Table 5-1	Business Networks	
<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>What It Is</i>
Biznik	http://biznik.com	Community of entrepreneurs and small businesses
Chief Financial Officer Network	www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=51826	Network of high-level CFOs, financial executives, and accounting leaders (requires LinkedIn membership)
Doostang	www.doostang.com	Career community for professionals seeking new jobs

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>What It Is</i>
E.Factor	www.efactor.com	Global network and virtual marketplace for entrepreneurs and investors
Entrepreneur Connect	http://econnect.entrepreneur.com	Community for entrepreneurial networking
Fast Company	www.fastcompany.com/company-of-friends	One of the first business social networks, organized by groups
Fast Pitch	http://fastpitchnetworking.com	One-stop network for professionals and business marketing
Jigsaw	www.jigsaw.com	Business card networking directory
MeettheBoss	www.meettheboss.com	Invitation-based network for executives and senior management, across industries
Naymz	www.naymz.com	Networking platform for professionals
PartnerUp	www.partnerup.com	Network for small-business owners
Plaxo Pulse	www.plaxo.com	Business address book for staying up-to-date with colleagues; LinkedIn alternative
Ryze	http://ryze.com	Business connections for jobs, careers, and sales
Spoke	www.spoke.com	Worldwide professional business directory
StartupNation	www.startupnation.com	Entrepreneurial business advice and networking
Talkbiznow	www.talkbiznow.com	Business services and collaboration network
The Funded	http://thefunded.com	Community of entrepreneurs who rate and compare investors and funding sources
Xing	www.xing.com	Global networking for professionals
Women about Biz	www.womenaboutbiz.com	Businesswomen's online resource center
Yammer	www.yammer.com	Free networking tool for networking within a company

It's too time-consuming to participate in multiple sites productively. Keep clear records of all sites that have your business profile. If your situation changes, you probably have to update your profiles individually. Figure 5-1 shows a networking profile for Suzanne the Magician, a magician and corporate entertainer in Minneapolis, on the Plaxo network. Suzanne participates in half a dozen other social networks, including Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter, and on several magic forums as well. Since leads may come from any of them, she must update profiles on many services. While you can syndicate content postings, you usually cannot syndicate profile entries.

Figure 5-1: Suzanne the Magician uses her Plaxo profile to provide a testimonial to the quality of her work and a link to her Web site.



Courtesy Suzanne!



TIP Submit your profile to several likely sites on a one-time basis, but commit to only one in terms of community participation.

Selecting Social Networks by Vertical Industry Sector

Whether you're marketing B2B or B2C, you find dozens of industry- or interest-specific social networks. Search online for communities in your industry, using the strategies described in Book VII, Chapter 1. As long as the social network is large enough to support your time investment, and continues to attract new users, you should enjoy enough of a payback to make your effort worthwhile.

Vertical industry sites, other than shopping, are particularly appealing for B2B marketers. If you use some adroit maneuvering, you can intersect with the sales cycle, reaching the appropriate decision-maker with the right message.

For the retail community, the growth of social shopping sites is a new avenue to reach consumers who want to spend after they see what everyone else is buying. Users flock to these sites for the latest product reviews, real-time deals, and news about the hottest items.

Track results so that you can decide which sites work best for you. If a site doesn't produce leads or sales after a few months, find another.



If you want to promote your products or services to more than one online community, customize your profiles and messages accordingly. For instance, a sporting goods store might promote camping gear on a social network for backpackers and running gear on one for joggers.

The list of vertical market social networks seems endless and ever changing. Table 5-2 provides a sample of some of these networks just to give you an idea of the range. This list includes no blog-only, bookmarking, or news aggregator sites.

Table 5-2 Vertical Market Social Networks		
<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
		<i>Art</i>
ArtSlant	www.artslant.com	Contemporary art network with profiles for artists, art professionals, art organizations, and art lovers
deviantART	www.deviantart.com	Post and share international art
Humble Voice	www.humblevoice.com	Virtual artistic space for "artists and those who appreciate them"
Imagekind	www.imagekind.com	CafePress-owned community for buying, selling, and creating art
Independent Collectors	www.independentcollectors.com	Online tool targeted at modern art collectors
Myartinfo	www.myartinfo.com	Facebook-like site for the art community with profiles, portfolios, and votes on art
quarterlife	www.quarterlife.com	Sharing site for artists, thinkers, and doers

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Table 5-2 (continued)		
<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Auto</i>		
AutoSpies	http://auto-spies.com	Blogs about car care reviews; auto news aggregator
CarGurus	www.cargurus.com	Automobile community with reviews, photos, and share opinions
Motortopia	www.motortopia.com	Community for lovers of cars, motor bikes, planes, and boats
<i>Books</i>		
Goodreads	www.goodreads.com	Book recommendations to share
LibraryThing	www.librarything.com	Book recommendations and online catalog
The Mystery Reader	http://themysteryreader.com	Mystery book reviews
<i>Design</i>		
Design Float	www.designfloat.com	Design-related content sharing, advertising, digital art, and branding
Decorati	http://decorati.com	Interior designer community enabling users to post items for sale and exchange
<i>Environment</i>		
BeGreen	www.begreenow.com	Carbon offsets for sale
TreeHugger	www.treehugger.com	Environmental topics at interactive community
<i>Entertainment, film, and music</i>		
CreateSpace	www.create-space.com	Creation, collaboration, and distribution for writers, musicians, and filmmakers
Fanpop	www.fanpop.com	Network of fan clubs for fans of television, movies, music, and more
Flixster	www.flixster.com	Movie lovers community
Last.fm	www.last.fm	Music community
mediabistro.com	www.media-bistro.com	Careers and community for media professionals

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Medical</i>		
PatientsLikeMe	www.patientslikeme.com	Patients, healthcare professionals, and industry organizations making connections
Sermo	www.sermo.com	Largest online physician community in the U.S.
<i>Legal</i>		
Lawyers.com	www.lawyers.com	International social networking community for lawyers and law students
<i>Philanthropy and nonprofits</i>		
Care2	www.care2.com	Online community for people passionate about making a difference
Changing ThePresent	www.changingthepresent.org	Nonprofit fundraising community with membership of more than 400 nonprofits
<i>Pets</i>		
MyCatSpace	www.mycatspace.com	Community for cat lovers
MyDogSpace	www.mydogspace.com	Community for dog lovers
Uniteddogs	http://en.uniteddogs.com	Social networking for dogs and their owners
<i>Shopping, fashion, and collecting</i>		
Curiobot	www.curiobot.net	Collection of the most interesting items for sale on the Internet
iliketotallyloveit.com	www.iliketotallyloveit.com	Product recommendations with public link to online shops
Kaboodle	www.kaboodle.com	Product discovery, recommendations, and sharing
lolligift	http://lolligift.com	Group gift buying service
Polyvore	www.polyvore.com	Product mixing and matching from any online store
Stylehive	www.stylehive.com	Stylish people connecting
ThisNext	www.thisnext.com	Product recommendation swaps

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Table 5-2 (continued)

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
UsTrendy	www.ustrendy.com	Vote on and shop for new items from indie designers
Wists	http://wists.com	Create and share wishlists with products from any Web site
<i>Sports</i>		
BallHype	http://ballhype.com	Aggregated sports news, blogs, and fan forums
beRecruited.com	www.berecruited.com	Connecting high school athletes and college coaches
<i>Science and technology</i>		
ScienceStage.com	http://sciencestage.com	Hub for research scientists
Sphinn	http://sphinn.com	Internet marketing news and forums

As always, include a link to your primary Web site and use some of your preferred search terms within your postings and profiles. If these sites have blogs or accept photos, video, or music, remember that you can syndicate that type of content to many sites simultaneously. For example, Blue Hill Hydraulics, a B2B company, uses the vertical social media site ScienceStage.com to reach prospective customers and employees at sciencestage.com/blue-hill-hydraulics. Its profile, under the About My Work section links to its Web site and is loaded with keywords.

Selecting Social Networks by Demographics

No one ever has enough staff and time to do everything. You already know that the more tightly you focus your marketing efforts, the better the payoff from your investment. If you created a strategic plan in Book I, Chapter 1, return to it to analyze and segment your markets demographically into smaller, niche markets that you can reach with a coordinated campaign.



Think online guerrilla marketing. Go after one niche market online at a time. After you conquer one, go after the next. If you scatter your efforts across too many target markets at one time, your business won't have enough visibility in any of them to drive meaningful traffic your way.

Table 5-3 describes some sites that are primarily demographically and geographically stratified. You can find many, many more. As usual, qualify the sites for your business by following the concepts described in Book VII, Chapter 1.

Table 5-3 Demographically and Geographically Stratified Sites

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Ethnic</i>		
Black Business Woman Online	http://mybbwo.com	A social network for black business women and women entrepreneurs
AsianTown.net	http://my.asiantown.net/index.html	Asian social community and news
BlackPlanet.com	www.blackplanet.com	African American professional network that includes job section by way of Monster.com
MiGente.com	www.migente.com	Largest Latin American community; includes job section by way of Monster.com
MyTribalSpace.com	www.mytribalspace.com/tribal	Native American social network
<i>High school and college</i>		
Classmates.com	www.classmates.com	Networking with members of your graduating class at all levels
myYearbook	www.myYearbook.com	Networking site for high school and college students and grads
reunion.com	www.reunion.com	Networking with members of your high school graduating class
The Quad	http://thequad.com	College networking site with an emphasis on Greek life
<i>Generational</i>		
20 Something Bloggers	www.20sb.net	Ning community for 20-somethings
Brazen Careerist	www.brazencareerist.com	Career-building community for GenY and millennials (born 1982 to 2000)
Club Penguin	http://clubpenguin.com	Disney site for children under 12
Eons	www.eons.com	Online community for boomers (born 1946 to 1964)
iMantri	www.imantri.com	Peer-to-peer mentoring for GenY and millennials

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Table 5-3 (continued)

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
Make Me Sustainable	http://makeme-sustainable.com	Environmental community with GenY appeal
More	www.more.com	Community for women over 40
<i>Geographical</i>		
foursquare	http://four-square.com	Mobile application to find friends and local businesses
MerchantCircle	www.merchant-circle.com	Find, review, and comment on local businesses
tribe.net	www.tribe.net	Local-resident connections for advice and sharing about local resources
Yelp	www.yelp.com	Local-business reviews and comments
<i>International</i>		
Badoo	http://badoo.com	Popular European social networking site
Nexopia	www.nexopia.com	Canada's largest social networking site for young people
Orkut	www.orkut.com/Main#Home	Google-owned alternative to MySpace and Facebook, now popular in Brazil
Sonico	www.sonico.com	Global Spanish language site with large U.S. membership
Zorpia	http://en.zorpia.com	International friendship network
<i>Moms</i>		
CafeMom	www.cafemom.com	Largest social networking and community site for moms and parenting
MomJunction	www.momjunction.com	Advice-sharing community for moms
Mommysavers	http://mommysavers.com	Money-saving community and tips for moms
MothersClick	www.mothersclick.com	First social network and parenting resource for moms
<i>Seniors</i>		
Grandparents.com	www.grandparents.com	Photo sharing and news site for grandparents

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
ReZoom.com	www.rezoom.com	Social network and information for seniors
Senior Enquirer	www.seniorenquirer.com	Senior social network for people over 60
<i>Tweens and young teens</i>		
GirlSense	www.girlsense.com	Online dress-up games for girls
UGAME	www.ugame.net	Social network for video gamers
<i>Wealthy</i>		
ASMALLWORLD	www.asmallworld.net	Private international community of culturally influential people

As usual, customize your message and profile for the audience you're trying to reach. Be sure to include a link to your primary Web site and some of your key search terms in any profile or posting. Figure 5-2 shows how businesses took advantage of the photo uploading feature at <http://mybbwo.com>, a social network for black business women online.

Figure 5-2: Multiple businesses post photos of their products on myBBWO, a social network for African American business-women.



Courtesy LaShanda Henry, creator of Black Business Women Online

Selecting Social Networks by Activity Type

We can imagine what you're thinking. Why in the world would you want more than one service of a particular type, such as video sharing or blogging? The answer is simple: to improve search engine rankings and inbound links from high-ranking sites. When your content appears on multiple sites, such as those listed by activity in Table 5-4, you're simply casting a wider net and hoping to catch more fish.

Table 5-4 Social Networks by Activity Type		
<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Networking and profiles</i>		
Bebo	www.bebo.com/c/site/index	Facebook-style site with global reach
eHow	www.ehow.com	Squidoo-like site with content submissions on how to do things
FriendFeed	http://friendfeed.com	Create personal networks to share with friends, family, and co-workers
Friendster	www.friendster.com	Older global online social network; popular in southeast Asia
Gather	www.gather.com	Facebook-style social network
hi5	http://hi5.com	Social entertainment for the youth market worldwide with MySpace-style profiles
HubPages	http://hubpages.com	Like Squidoo, allows users to publish expert content
MocoSpace	www.mocospace.com	Online community that's cell-phone compatible
Tagged	www.tagged.com	Large, teen-oriented social network with a history of spamming and scamming; has recently reformed its privacy and security practices as a result of lawsuits
<i>Photo sharing (Flickr alternatives)</i>		
HoverSpot.com	http://hoverspot.com	Free social network with good photo sharing capabilities
Photobucket	http://photobucket.com	Free image hosting and photo and video sharing

<i>Web Site</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Video sharing (YouTube alternatives)</i>		
Dailymotion	www.dailymotion.com	Post videos, music, and movies
Jing	http://jingproject.com	Video-sharing over Web, IM, and e-mail
LiveVideo	www.livevideo.com	Social networking and video hosting site
Motionbox	www.motionbox.com	Easy video sharing site
Multiply	http://multiply.com	Share photos and videos with friends and family
Revver	http://revver.com	Online media network with shared ad revenue
Ustream	www.ustream.tv	Platform for live, interactive, broadcast video
Vimeo	http://vimeo.com	Created by filmmakers and videographers to share creative work
<i>Microblogging (Twitter alternatives)</i>		
Plurk	www.plurk.com	A Twitter alternative for events with calendar display
Seesmic	http://seesmic.com	Twitter client that permits photo and video sharing
ShoutEm	www.shoutem.com	Mobile, location-based, microblogging network
<i>Unique services</i>		
Maholo.com	www.mahalo.com	Users with questions connecting with volunteers who write answers
Meetup	www.meetup.com	Local-group organizing for face-to-face meetings
QOOP	http://www.qoop.com	Build creative mash-ups to share or sell
wetpaint.com	www.wetpaint.com	Site for creating wikis (shared content)



The secret to keeping this situation manageable is syndication, via RSS or Ping.fm or a similar service as discussed in Book II, Chapter 1. You post a photo, video, or blog entry to your primary site and automatically update other services with the same content.

Even with syndication, use some common sense. It doesn't help to drive the "wrong" fish to your Web site and dilute your conversion rate. Of course, if you've monetized your site by showing ads by the impressions, then the more eyeballs, the merrier.

Because setting up multiple accounts can be time consuming, you may want to stagger the process. Of course, by now you automatically include in any profile or posting a link to your primary Web site and some of your key search terms.

Figure 5-3 shows how PC Solutions of Illinois, Inc., cleverly used a Gather (www.gather.com) blog post titled "How to Find a Quality Computer Repair Company" to direct readers to its Web site (www.pcsolutionstech.com) using the search term *Click here for information on Chicago computer repairs*.

Figure 5-3:
Sammie Moon of PC Solutions uses a Gather blog post to direct users to his company Web site.

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying a Gather blog post. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=28147497796921>. The page title is "How To Find A Quality Computer Repair Company | Gather". The user profile for "sammieymoon.gather.com" is visible at the top, with a "Join Gather" button. The article title is "How To Find A Quality Computer Repair Company" by Sammie Moon, dated December 21, 2009 08:45 AM EST, with 5 views. The article text discusses the value of computers and provides tips for finding a reliable repair company. A link at the bottom of the article reads "Click here for information on Chicago computer repairs". On the right side, there is a sidebar with a "You might also like" section and a large advertisement for "PC Solutions of Illinois, Inc." with navigation links for HOME, SERVICES, and SCHEDULE AN.

Courtesy PC Solutions of Illinois, Inc.