Chapter 5: Multiplying Your Impact

In This Chapter

✔ **Integrating social media with e-mail campaigns**

✔ **Incorporating social media, publicity, and public relations**

✔ **Combining social media with paid advertising**

✔ **Leveraging social media with Web site features**

Social media has become such an essential way of "getting the word out" that it now also has become a powerful tool for leveraging other forms of online marketing. All your marketing goes viral when you take advantage of social media channels. Integration with social media can help you

✦ Increase newsletter subscriptions

✦ Broaden the audience for event announcements

✦ Maximize the distribution of press releases and other news

✦ Find additional paid online advertising opportunities

✦ Drive traffic to your hub Web site to encourage users to take advantage of special features

We discuss simple integration techniques in earlier chapters, such as displaying chiclets to invite people to follow your company on social media outlets and implementing Social Share buttons to encourage viewers to share your pages with others. In this chapter, we discuss more advanced methods for integrating social media into your overall marketing plans.

Though integration is generally easy and effective, it still calls for a little strategic planning beforehand and some tactical execution. Eventually, though, these tactics become a matter of habit.

REMEMBER Include your integrated marketing tactics on your Social Media Marketing Plan in Book I, Chapter 2 and schedule activities on your Social Media Activity Calendar in Book 1, Chapter 3.

Thinking Strategically

For many businesses, social media marketing adds to the richness of the company's marketing mix, but others see it as a low-cost substitute for paid advertising, pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns, standard press release distribution, loyalty programs, or other forms of marketing.

WARNING!

If you're planning to swap tactics, proceed with caution because a social media campaign may take six months to a year to reach maturity. Don't stop using other tactics that now reach your target markets successfully. Wait for results from metrics showing that social media perform at least as well.

Whether you're planning a substitution or an addition, take advantage of the measurement tools we discuss in earlier chapters to establish baselines for traffic, click-through rate (CTR), conversion rates, and return on investment (ROI) for existing marketing methods so that you can detect any lift (or drop) that integration brings.

REMEMBER

You don't know what to measure unless you first set goals for your integration efforts, which we discussed in Book I, Chapter 1. Sometimes you're after sales, sometimes leads, sometimes brand recognition, or sometimes just your 15 minutes of fame.

In its *2010 Social Media Marketing Benchmark Survey*, Marketing Sherpa asked businesses to assess the effectiveness of social media integration with other marketing tactics they used. Businesses reported that some forms of integration worked better than others, as shown in Figure 5-1. You might want to consider their experiences as you move forward with your own plans for integration.

As always, be sure to define the specific form your integration methods will take, who will execute them and when, and how you will measure the results. Create a block diagram showing how content will flow as part of your integration plans (see Book I, Chapter 2).

Integrating with E-Mail

It may seem counterintuitive, given all the hype about social media, but recent studies show that people who use social media are *more* avid e-mail users than others. A December 2009 analysis by www.sharethis.com reveals that most users still prefer to share content via e-mail and that e-mail retains the highest level of engagement per click-through, as shown in Table 5-1.

Figure 5-1:
Businesses like the ease of social media integration and how well they can track from initial engagement to conversion.
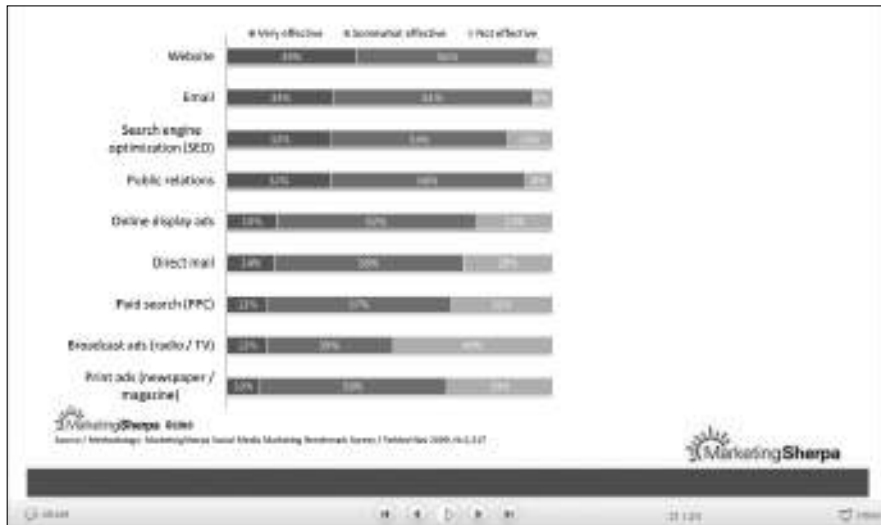
Source: MarketingSherpa.com

Table 5-1	Preferred Methods of Sharing Content	
Method	*Preferred Sharing Method*	*Engagement per Click*
E-mail	46%	2.95 page views
Facebook	33.32%	2.76 page views
Twitter	5.82%	1.66 page views
Other	14.17%	N/A

Source: http://sharethis.com/news/press-releases/sharethis-releases-the-social-engagement-of-sharing

Confirming these observations, *View from the Social Inbox 2010*, a study published by the marketing agency Merkle (`www.merkleinc.com/viewfrom socialinbox2010`), indicates that

✦ Forty-two percent of social networkers check their e-mail four or more times a day, compared to just 27 percent of those who don't use the current top social networking sites.

✦ Sixty-three percent of social networkers use the same e-mail account for their social networking messages and the majority of their permission, or *opt-in,* e-mail.

✦ Twenty percent of Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter users have posted or shared something from permission e-mail to their social accounts by using a Share option.

With numbers like these, you have every reason to integrate e-mail with social media to attract new subscribers, promote your newsletter, obtain content ideas, and identify issues to address in your e-mail newsletters. For more information on e-mail marketing, see *E-Mail Marketing For Dummies*, by John Arnold.

Gaining more subscribers

Wherever and whenever prospects discover your presence on social media, try to provide them with other opportunities to find out how you might be able to solve their problems. Your newsletter is certainly one of those opportunities. Follow these guidelines:

✦ **Include a link for newsletter subscription on your blog, all your other social media pages, and your e-mail signature block.** Constant Contact (`http://apps.facebook.com/ctctjmml`) and MailChimp (`www.mailchimp.com/campaign/getsocial`), among others, have apps you can add to your Facebook page to allow your fans to sign up for your newsletter directly from your Facebook page (see Figure 5-2). You never know — you might reach dozens, hundreds, maybe thousands of new prospects.

✦ **Treat your newsletter as an event on social media networks.** Add a preview of topics or tweet an announcement of your newsletter a day or so in advance. Include a linkable call-to-action to subscribe in both cases.

✦ **Post a teaser line in your social media outlets with a linkable call to action.** You might say, for example, "If you need to learn more about healthcare reform for small businesses, sign up for our newsletter."

✦ **Post newsworthy findings.** Use material from your newsletter on social news services to attract more readers.

✦ **Link to a sample newsletter or newsletter archive on your blog, Web site, or Static FBML (Facebook Markup Language) page so that prospective subscribers can see its usefulness.** Of course, you indicate the frequency with which you e-mail newsletters.

Figure 5-2: Facebook newsletter sign-up on Nicolette Tallmadge Designs. Both the Info and Wall pages display a smaller e-mail sign-up block in the right margin.

Finding more followers and connections

E-mail integration with social media works both ways: You can drive people from your newsletter to social media, or use these techniques to gain subscribers:

✦ Use your newsletter to drive traffic to social media outlets as does poet-philosopher and inspirational speaker Noah benShea, shown in Figure 5-3.

✦ Include Social Share and Follow Us On buttons in every issue of your newsletter.

✦ Add options for signing up for social media on the e-mail registration page on your Web site (if possible).

✦ Use your e-newsletter to make an offer or run a contest for social media participants as Bluefly.com, a retailer of discount designer apparel for women. This innovative contest spurs interaction by having participants "vote" on entries using the Like feature on Facebook.

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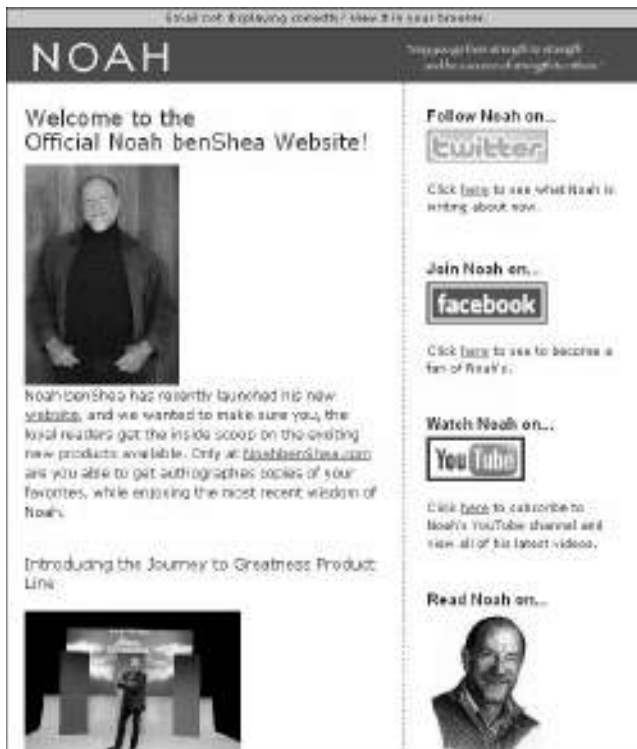
Figure 5-3:
This newsletter drives traffic to multiple social media outlets, as well as to Noah benShea's primary Web site.

REMEMBER

Cross-promote your e-mail newsletter on all your social media channels. Remember to post all your social venues, not just your hub Web site, in your e-mail signature block.

Finding and sharing content

Writing content continuously for newsletters and social media is always a challenge. However, you can exploit the easy interaction between the two to lighten your writing burden.

✦ **Take advantage of social marketing capabilities available by way of your e-mail service provider.** Many companies now let you easily send your e-mail directly to Facebook and other social networking pages.

✦ **Mine social media for content.** Read related information on social news sites, listen to hot topics that come up in LinkedIn and Facebook groups, and watch for trending topics. Pay attention to comments on your own and other people's forums, message boards, and social communities. They may clue you in to concerns, trends, or industry news.

✦ **Use Google Alerts, Social Mention, Twitter Search, and other search functions for mentions of your company.** You can turn positive comments into testimonial content on your newsletter, social media outlet, or Web site (with permission) or respond to many people at a time who may have read a negative comment.

✦ **Create a Q&A section in your regular newsletter.** Respond to questions that are common across social media venues.

✦ **Use keywords and tags to identify social news and content related to your industry.** In turn, be sure to include keywords in any newsletters or newsletter announcements that may be reposted on the Web.

✦ **Pursue market intelligence even further by using the advanced Twitter search features.** Sort tweets geographically by search term. Then segment your mailing list accordingly, if appropriate. Visit `http://search.twitter.com/advanced`.

TIP

Use Google Insights (`www.google.com/insights/search/#`) to figure out the time of day, day of week, and time of year that users are most likely to use specific search terms. Use that information to schedule your topical e-mail blasts. There's nothing like having information show up in someone's inbox just when they're looking for it! You'll be way beyond "top of mind."

Integrating with Public Relations and Press Releases

The reasons for dealing with public relations and press release distribution haven't changed since the explosion of social media — just the methodology. Where once you worried only about the care and feeding of a small covey of journalists, now you must nourish a veritable horde of bloggers, individual influencers, authors of ezine articles, editors of online publications, and individuals who will recommend your article on a social news service.

TIP

In companies that view social media primarily as a public relations vehicle, the public or community relations person may be the one who coordinates the social media marketing strategy.

All these venues, not just standard media, now open a door to public attention. Take advantage of all of them as a cost-effective way to achieve these goals:

✦ **Broadcast announcements of products, appearances, and events:** Alerting target markets to new possibilities is one of the most traditional uses of publicity.

✦ **Build brand recognition:** Whether it's acknowledgment of your participation in community events, awareness of your position within your industry, or simply the frequent repetition of your name in front of your audience, press coverage brings you publicity at a relatively low cost.

✦ **Ask journalists, authors, or bloggers to write about your company:** Stories about your firm — at least the positive ones — boost your credibility, extend your reach, and provide you with "bragging" destinations for links from your site. The trade press is especially critical to business-to-business (B2B) companies.

✦ **Drive traffic to your Web site:** Online press releases almost always have at least one link to your central Web presence, and often more. Social media offers a mechanism for distributing linkable press content around the Web that others may embed. The accumulation of long-lasting inbound links obviously has a greater impact than a one-time release alone.

✦ **Improve search engine ranking:** You can gain many inbound links to your site when your release posts on multiple press outlets. Press sites generally transfer high "link juice," and Google in particular weighs press mentions highly. Your visibility on preferred search terms may also rise, especially if you have optimized your press releases and headlines for keywords.

Setting up an online newsroom

If you haven't already done so, set up an online newsroom (media page) for the press on your primary Web site. Use this newsroom to present any press releases you create, provide writers with downloadable logos and images, link to articles and posts written about your company, and let writers sign up for RSS feeds for future release.

You might want to set up this newsroom as a separate section in blog format (another way to integrate social media!) to aggregate queries, moderated posts, and trackbacks from individual releases. Give each release a unique URL and place your headline on the page title.

Cultivating influencers

Identifying influencers is one key way to get into a conversation. Influencers are people whose blogs, tweets, or Facebook pages drive much of the conversation in a particular topic area. They often have a loyal following of readers who engage in dialog, repeat, and amplify discussions the influencer began. In the olden days, press folks would cultivate public relations and press contacts the same way you now cultivate influencers.

Here's a quick checklist for finding these key figures to approach with a request for coverage:

✦ **Find conversations on blogs, Twitter, Facebook, forums, message boards, communities, and industry-specific social media by using keywords relevant to your company, brand, product, industry, and competitors.** This task is easier now that Google includes social media in its search results. To see only results from social media, be sure to choose Show Options➪Updates➪Your Timeframe in the left side of a search results page. Join appropriate groups when you find them.

✦ **Use search tools on particular networks and aggregator searches such as Social Mention, too.** Those who post most often, or who have a lot of connections or followers, may be the experts or influencers you seek. Monitor the conversations for a while to be sure you've identified the right folks.

✦ **Use standard search techniques to locate trade publications or related newsletters.** Publication sites may include links to their own social media sites. Or, identify specific writers and editors whose interests sync with yours and search for their individual blogs and social networking accounts.

✦ **Become a contributor who answers questions on related subjects.** You can (and should) identify yourself, without promoting your company or products in your comments. Before you ask for anything, engage in the conversation and offer links to related posts and articles. Because links are the currency of social media, link from your site to influencers' sites, blogs, and tweets, and become a connection or follower.

TIP

To track your contacts, bookmark the conversations you find, organizing them in subfolders by the name of influencer.

Distributing your news

Frankly, the more sites the merrier. Though you pay a penalty for duplicate content in search engines, press releases don't seem to suffer.

REMEMBER

Be sure to place identifying tags on links in different press releases so that you can tell which releases generate click-throughs to your site. If you create only one release a month, this isn't essential; however, if you have an active campaign with numerous press mentions, or other types of postings on the same source sites, it's absolutely critical.

Table 5-2 shows a partial list of press and PR online resources.

Table 5-2	Publicity and PR Resources	
Name	*URL*	*Description*
BuzzStream	`www.buzzstream.com/social-media`	Fee-based social CRM and monitoring service
ClickPress	`www.clickpress.com`	Free press release posting on site
Free Press Release	`www.free-press-release.com`	Free press release distribution; includes social media
Help a Reporter Out	`http://helpareporter.com`	Matching reporters to sources
HubSpot	`ww.slideshare.net/HubSpot/new-research-on-news-release-best-practices`	Tips for optimizing press releases and PR for SEO
Mashable Social Media Guide	`http://mashable.com/2007/10/20/press-releases`	List of 20+ free press release distribution sites
Muck Rack	`http://muckrack.com/beats`	Journalists on Twitter by beats
Muck Rack	`http://muckrack.com/press_releases/submit`	Fee-based Twitter pitch to journalists, $50 minimum
PitchEngine	`www.pitchengine.com`	Social PR platform, social media release creation and distribution; free and paid versions
Press About	`www.pressabout.com`	Free press release distribution in form of blog
PressDoc	`www.pressdoc.com`	Write, edit , publish and share social media releases online; €10 per release
Press Release Grader	`http://pressrelease.grader.com`	Free assessment of press releases for links and SEO
reddit	`www.reddit.com`	Social news site that accepts links to releases
Shift Communications	`http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/SMR_v1.5.pdf`	Social media press release format
The Open Press	`www.theopenpress.com`	Free press release posting onsite

Posting on your own sites

Post your release, at minimum, on your own Web site and blog. You can, however, easily add releases to your other social networking profiles, if it's appropriate. For instance, an author might post a release for each book she writes, but wouldn't necessarily post a press release for everyone hired at her company.

TIP

To simplify your life, use syndication techniques such as Ping.fm or RSS (see Book II, Chapter 1) to post both press release and newsletter content on your blog, Facebook pages, and elsewhere. Of course, then the content will be identical.

Using standard press distribution sources

Many, many paid online press release distribution sources exist. Among the most well known are BusinessWire, PR Newswire PR Web, and marketwire.com.

Sometimes, distribution services offer levels of service at different prices depending on the quantity and type of distribution, geographical distribution, and whether distribution includes social media, multimedia, offline publications, or other criteria.

Table 5-2, a little earlier in this chapter, includes several options for free distribution. Many free services don't distribute your releases — except perhaps to search engines — but, rather, simply post them on their sites for finite periods. Whether they're free or paid, be sure to read carefully what you're getting.

Perhaps the most straightforward example of integrating press releases with social media is the distribution of a release announcing your new social media presence, as Taipan Publishing Group did, shown in Figure 5-4. It distributed its press release through 24-7pressrelease.com, one of many paid press release distribution services.

REMEMBER

Post linkable event announcements on calendars all over the Web, as well as on event pages on Facebook, MySpace, and other social media. Calendars may be an "old-fashioned," presocial technique, but many high-ranking calendar pages feed "link juice" until your event occurs and the listing expires.

Using bloggers as a distribution channel

You've laid the groundwork by identifying appropriate bloggers and other influencers and participated on their publications. The next step is to get them to post your news. The most discrete way is to e-mail it (or a link to it) with a cover note to see whether the recipient wants to share the article with readers or comment on its content.

Figure 5-4:
Taipan Publishing Group issued a press release announcing its social media campaign.

Courtesy Taipan Publishing Group

Because you're "pitching" the bloggers, include in your cover note the reason that you think readers of the blog would be interested and a descriptive paragraph about your company. It's considered bad form to submit your press release as a post on most blogs — bad enough that a moderator probably would exclude it.

WARNING!

If you include a product sample with your release, implicitly asking for an independent review, the blogger now has to disclose that fact. In October 2009, the Federal Trade Commission published final guidelines for endorsement and testimonials. For more information, see www.ftc.gov/opa/2009/10/endortest.shtm.

Using social news services and other social networks

You can send similar e-mails to individuals and influencers you have identified as participating in key discussions about related products or issues, including a short notice about the press release on Twitter and a mention to groups and professionals on sites like Facebook and LinkedIn.

You can submit your release to the few social news services, such as reddit, that permit you to submit your own link to your press release. Figure 5-5 shows a link on reddit to a release from http://huladancehq.com. In other cases, you may need to submit to social news and bookmark services from another identity, or wait until the story appears on a blog and submit the blog post instead.

Figure 5-5: reddit has a link to the press release submitted by Hula Dance Headquarters under the topic *Hawaii.*

Courtesy HulaDanceHQ.com

> **TIP**
>
> If your press release includes multimedia or you've created a video or audio release, be sure to submit it to relevant directories such as `www.blog talkradio.com`, `www.digitalpodcast.com`, or `www.bloguniverse. com/video-blogs`.

Emphasizing content

As always, content, tone, and interest level are the keys. Keep your release to about 400 words or fewer if you're including multimedia. Keep your headline to about 80 characters and use an `<h1>` HTML header tag.

Combine anchor text with the URL in parentheses right next to it (to cover all bases), but don't use the same anchor text twice. On some press distribution services, and of course on social media, you have a chance to submit keywords or tags, an essential process for leveraging your press release for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes. Be sure that some or all of these keywords are also included in the headline or first paragraph of the release. Try to use at least some of your primary set of search terms, as described in Book II, Chapter 2.

Rethinking the press release for social media

Over the past several years, users have debated the value of a new format for social media press releases. The biggest differences are that the social media release

✦ Usually has three or four embedded links with anchor text for search engines, rather than URLs only (although you can mix the two)

✦ May include embedded video and other multimedia options

✦ Allows reports to "rip" content electronically and re-purpose it

✦ May include tags and sharing options

In its *2009-10 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report*, Marketing Sherpa found the social media release roughly comparable to traditional releases in terms of the resulting quantity and quality of leads. The biggest difference they saw was that businesses use the new format only about half as often as the traditional one. HubSpot, on the other hand, found that traditional releases were republished in full about 20 percent more often.

In others words, "You pays your money and you takes your choice." The social media release is a convenient way to ensure that your master release format has all the elements you might need for various social media submissions.

You can find templates for your press releases; Figure 5-6 shows one. You can pick and choose the bits and pieces to submit as appropriate to different services. If you're using a standard press release distribution service, you can easily extract the pure text version and adjust the URLs.

The template is only a suggested one, so feel free to modify it. A sample of a prepared social media release is shown in Figure 5-7.

For more information, watch the HubSpot presentation at `http://bit.ly/3DnjW`.

Measuring results

The same social monitoring tools that you use to find influencers can be applied to track key performance indicators for your press efforts, such as Google Alerts, Social Mention, and `search.twitter.com`. This is a good place to use all that "qualitative" data, as well as advertising measurements for online brand awareness and equity. (See, for example, `www.questionpro.com/brand-awareness.html` or `www.businessknowhow.com/internet/socialmedia.htm`.)

Figure 5-6:
Todd Defren of Shift Communications created this template for a social media press release format.
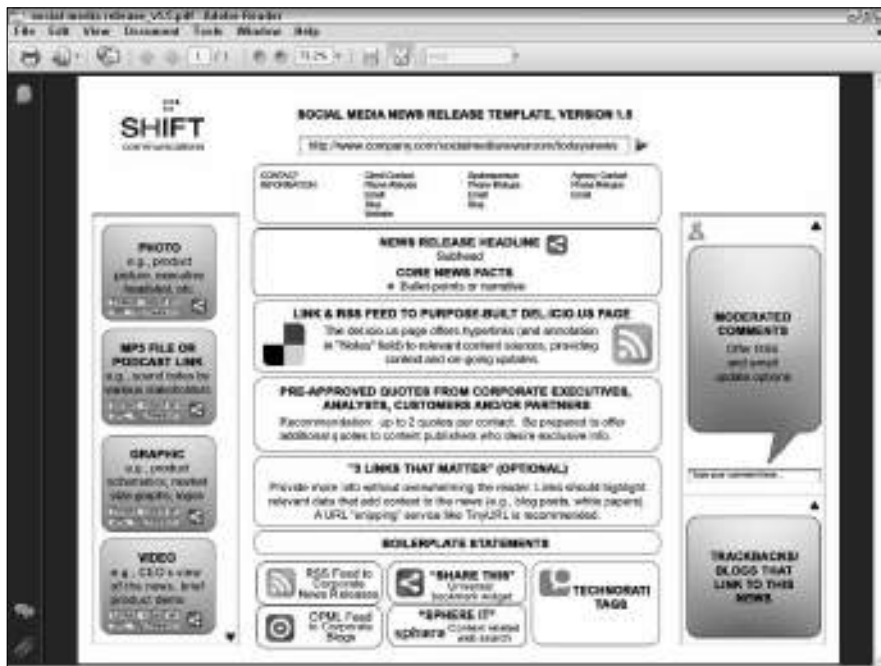
Courtesy SHIFT Communications PR

Figure 5-7:
A press release in social media format produced by way of PitchEngine.

Courtesy pitchengine®

REMEMBER

Measure baselines before you begin your press campaigns! Be sure that before-and-after results are for comparable timeframes. Here are a few of the key performance indicators you might find relevant:

✦ Number of online mentions of company, brand, product or service line, and/or individual products or services anywhere online, including social media, during a specific time frame.

✦ Number and location of media placements — where and when mentions occurred, a press release was published, or an article about your company or product appeared on a recognized media outlet, whether online or offline.

✦ Site traffic generated from press releases and other linkable press-related mentions (see referrer logs in your Web stats software for number of inbound links from each source); include comparative click-through rates, and conversion rates, if available. To make this process easier, tag links with the identifiers related to the topic or date of the press release.

✦ Social media campaign participation and sentiment using monitoring tools; see Book II, Chapter 1.

✦ Average frequency of the product, company, or brand conversations related to the release compared to the frequency of conversations before the release.

✦ Estimated costs (hard dollars and labor) that were spent. Be sure to include costs for paid distribution, if used. To compare ROI for publicity to other methods, you compare costs to the value of sales that can be traced back to the release (if any). If you can't trace back sales, you might be able to compare brand engagement.

Integrating with Paid Advertising

Social media has the advertising world in ferment. As applications from social media companies mature, audiences grow, and technology improves, the companies expand their advertising opportunities to make money for their investors — everyone is just trying to make a buck. Within weeks in 2010, major advertising announcements had the virtual world aflutter.

First, Facebook decided to end the display of traditional banner ads in favor of ads that feature social actions (called *engagement ads*), ending a long agreement with Microsoft. Then Twitter announced that it would start placing "promoted tweets" (paid advertising) at the top of Twitter search results.

Both announcements indicate ways in which social media may affect your online marketing plans: First, they become destination opportunities for your own paid advertising; second, social media technology is fueling the growth of the new engagement ad.

Advertising on social media sites

Many social media sites have long accepted advertising that you can incorporate into your plans for paid advertising (if any). Some, like Ning and Squidoo and many smaller social media venues display standard PPC, banner, and/or multimedia ads from Google Adsense. Flickr ads are served by Yahoo! Ad Solutions (`http://advertising.yahoo.com/advertisers`). Until recently, Bing served display ads to Facebook, but not any longer; Facebook now handles all its graphical ads.

A recent eye-tracking study by Oneupweb showed that users really do look at paid ads appearing on the search results pages of social media services.

For more information on online advertising, see *Advertising For Dummies,* by Gary Dahl.

Self-service ads

Larger sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, have long sold display ads using their on-site, self-service tools for ad creation and targeting. Table 5-3 lists popular social media sites offering paid advertising options.

Table 5-3	Social Media Sites That Offer Paid Advertising	
Name	*URL for Media Kit and Advertising Information*	*Notes*
Facebook	`www.facebook.com/ advertising`	Demographics information at `www.facebook.com/ help/?page=863`
LinkedIn	`http://advertising. linkedin.com`	Demographics at `http:// advertising.linkedin. com/audience`
MySpace	`https://advertise. myspace.com`	Demographics at `https:// advertise.myspace.com/ targetedadvertising. html`
reddit	`www.reddit.com/ad_inq`	Demographics at `quant cast.com/reddit`
Twitter	`http://blog.twitter. com/2010/04/hello- world.html`	Promoted tweets starting with selected advertisers

To be sure, some of these user-generated ads are plug-ugly, much like newsletters in the early days of desktop publishing. In the future, social networks may add prepackaged, preformatted ads to which you need to add only your text.

You can and should take advantage of targeting your audience as closely as the tools allow, selecting by geography, demographics, education, and interest area whenever possible. Some people have objected to the targeting: Older women seem to receive a disproportionate number of ads for skin creams and diets; those who change their status to Engaged are quickly deluged with ads for wedding service providers.

You can evaluate advertising placements on these sites just as you would evaluate advertising placed anywhere else. Using the advertising metrics discussed in Book VIII, Chapter 2, consider cost per click (CPC), cost per 1000 impressions (CPM), click-through rate, and resulting conversions to decide whether any of these ads pay off for you.

Results so far indicate that ads appearing on social media pages generally perform slightly worse than banner ads on other publications. The average click-through rate (CTR) on banners in 2009 was only 0.1 — 0.3 percent; on PPC ads it was closer to 1 to 3 percent. However, so many variables affect CTR — ad size, placement, quality of the ad, match to audience, and value of the offer — that it's hard to generalize. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the CTR on Facebook display ads ran about half the average.

Averages are averages. The range at both ends may be extreme. Like so much material on the Web, the only metrics that matter are your own. Test the same ad in several places at the same time to see which publishers yield the most bang for your advertising buck.

In addition to self-serve ads, many social media sites offer other alternatives for advertising. For instance, you can use a static FBML page to insert an entire page (or pages) of HTML advertising content, as BMW did with its BMW Inside page at `www.facebook.com/BMW#!/BMW?v=app_7146470109`.

Targeting your market is primary. Spiceworks, a provider of free network management software, is so successful at delivering a target audience of highly coveted IT professionals on its forum pages (`http://community. spiceworks.com`) that paid advertising supports the company. With click-through rates of 2 to 20 percent, it can charge a premium for its ads. Don't overlook small social sites that can deliver your audience directly to your site. They're worth it!

Promoted tweets

The industry has long anticipated the Twitter rollout of some form of advertising to monetize its site. The only question was when and what form it would take. Twitter is starting with a few large company pioneers and will eventually extend it to others.

Twitter claims it will measure whether the promoted tweets "resonate" with users to decide whether the promotions should be continued. Resonance

involves a proprietary algorithm that involves multiple factors. Charges initially are based on a CPM model, but that's expected to change as Twitter obtains more data on other ways to measure ad value.

Though labeled as "promoted," the tweets are sent to those who follow a brand. Because users can perform standard actions — such as reply, retweet, and "favorite" — on these promoted tweets, the tweets are expected to have a longer shelf-life and larger audience than if they were simply published only once or limited just to a brand's enrolled followers.

As an advertiser, you need to maintain your communication effort with Twitter users; promoted tweets don't replace that. Put on your imagination thinking cap: You may need to revise your advertising creatives and offers to fit better with what the Twitter user expects and what promotion is most likely to be replied, retweeted, and otherwise spread around.

Some expect that promoted tweets will eventually infiltrate users' individual Twitter streams and end up redisplayed on other sites. Eventually, third-party sites will probably be able to negotiate to show ads and share revenue. One thing is certain: Lots of change is coming to the online advertising world. Stay up-to-date on promoted tweets at `http://blog.twitter.com`.

Engagement ads

Users have obviously started to tune out banner ads, even when the ads spill all over content and refuse to close, irritate eyeballs with annoying animation, or interrupt concentration with surprising bursts of unwanted sound.

The fuse was lit for innovation and social media technologies ignited it, for good or ill. The marriage of advertising message with individual user information — with the potential of turning every viewer into a shill — has serious implications for privacy. Although the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) has published best practices for user opt-in and privacy protection (`www.iab.net/socialads` and `www.iab.net/sm_buyers_guide`), it isn't clear how well they will be followed.

The IAB defines these engagement ads, sometimes called *social banners,* as "a type of banner that incorporates social or conversational functionality within it. . . . The key to success is for social banner ads to enable consumers to have a real interactive experience within the unit, as opposed to just passively viewing the content within the ad."

Comment-style ads seem to work well for entertainment, new products, cars, and clothes, though virtual gift ads seem to attract consumer product and entertainment advertisers. Clicking the Like button on an ad now turns viewers into connections for that brand. This call-to-action ad works well for any established brand, luxury products, and products or entertainers with a passionate following.

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Your Impact**

More complex engagement ads draw content from a social network: the photo image and name from a profile (presuming an emotionally effective brand endorsement) or user-generated phrases from tweets, blogs, or RSS feeds. Users review the modified ads; if they agree to allow it, the ads are then distributed to their personal networks. For these complex ads to operate, the user must already be connected to her social network. (One could imagine using these ads to play an interesting game of rumor.)

Anyone can create a self-service display ad, though having the assistance of an experienced graphic designer helps. However, these interactive engagement ads probably require involvement from tech support or your Web developer.

Like the promoted tweets, engagement ads have an enhanced value based on how often others share them. If the sharing results in a cascading effect of recommended impressions to presumably qualified prospects, who just so happen to be friends, all the better for you. However, you need to watch for changes in pricing and business models as engagement ads take hold.

Integrating with Your Web Site

Any Web site can incorporate a myriad of features that integrate with social media, going well beyond the obvious and oft-repeated reminders to include Follow Us On and Share buttons everywhere, including product pages within stores. You can get clever: Include links to your Help forum or YouTube video tutorials as part of the automated purchase confirmation e-mail you send to buyers.

In some cases, "old-fashioned" versions of social media, such as onsite forums, chat rooms, product reviews, and wikis effectively draw repeat visitors to the hub site, avoiding any integration with third-party social media sites.

More advanced sites have already implemented Web 2.0 techniques onsite, including blogs and communities and other calls for user-generated content, including photos and videos of people using your product or suggesting creative new designs and applications.

Several strategic factors may affect your decision whether to implement such techniques onsite or off:

✦ The cost of development, storage, and support and ongoing maintenance versus costs offsite

✦ SEO and link strategies

✦ Plus-and-minus points of managing a more centralized and simplified Web presence

A few onsite techniques, like loyalty programs, don't seem to integrate particularly well with social media, but three other popular methods practically cry out for integration: coupons, discounts, and freebies; games and contests; and microsites. For more information about onsite and other forms of online marketing, see Jan's book *Web Marketing For Dummies,* 2nd Edition.

Coupons, discounts, and freebies

It doesn't take much monitoring of Facebook and Twitter and social news, bookmarking, and shopping streams to see how frequently they're used to offer time-limited deals, coupons, special promotions, discounts, and free samples.

Certainly, longer-term offers can be made to LinkedIn and Plaxo members, to groups on Facebook or Flickr, or to members of a forum on any topic. However, the sense of urgency in certain social media environments catches viewers' interest. Just like the competitive energy of an auction may cause bidders to offer more than they intend, the ephemeral nature of real-time offers may inspire viewers to grab for a coupon they might otherwise have passed up. Though some of the interest in savings and discounts may be encouraged by the recent recessionary mood, which makes people hyperattentive to opportunities to save money; interest in getting "a deal" may also simply be human nature.

The upside and downside of real-time social media is precisely the immediacy of these offers and how quickly a chain of other posts extinguishes them from awareness. On one hand, you have a chance to move overstock quickly, bring in business on a slow day, or gain new prospects from a group you might not otherwise reach without making a long-term, and perhaps too-expensive commitment. On the other hand, you have to preplan and schedule your posts, repeating them frequently enough throughout the day to appear in real-time search results and near the top of chronologically organized posts on any social media site.

REMEMBER

Always link back to your primary Web site or blog, not only to explain the details of the offer, but also to enjoy the inbound link value, offer additional goods and services, and capture prospect information. Be sure to use a unique promotion code for each offer, and tag your links with identifiers to track the source of click-throughs and conversions.

Most of the hundreds of online coupon sites already have a presence on Twitter, Facebook, Digg, and elsewhere. You can use their services or simply create a coupon of your own. Figure 5-8 shows a Twitter coupon generator application (twtQpon), along with the tweet that goes with it. The tweet links to a coupon on twtQpon, which in turn offers a discount at the UrbanLatinoRadio store. This app may be surpassed by the new promoted tweets, or it may remain popular if it proves to be more cost-effective. Wouldn't it be nice to have a crystal ball?

Figure 5-8:
A Twitter message links to a coupon on the third-party site.

REMEMBER
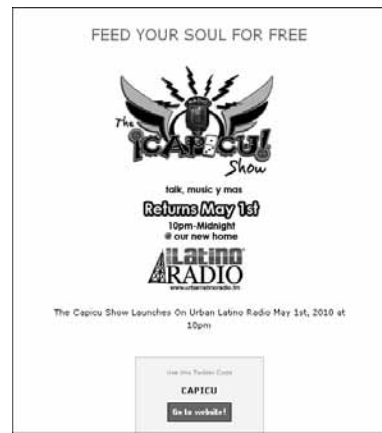
Whether you offer a discount through your Web site, social media, or any other form of advertising, be sure to include the impact of the discount in your cost analysis. Giving away a free soda may cost a business only 10 cents (mostly for the cup!), but if it gives away 1,000 drinks, the discount costs $100.

In the next chapter, we discuss a new model for coupons that is dependent on volume use reaching a critical mass.

Contests and games

Your imagination is the only limit to contests and games that you can post on your site and cross-promote via social media. As usual, make sure that viewers link back and forth among your sites, ensuring that an inbound link to your primary Web presence exists. The goals of your contest may vary:

✦ Branding and name recognition

✦ Building relationships through entertainment

✦ Obtaining feedback and building community through customer-generated content

✦ Locating hard-to-find resources, clients, or vendors

✦ Cross-promoting

✦ Acquiring testimonials

✦ Getting input into your own brainstorming process about where your product or service should go

As with special offers, be sure to include the cost of prizes and the labor involved in running the contest in your analysis of ROI. Depending on the goal of the contest, you may be looking for new visitors, repeat visitors, leads, or sales.

For a good example, review the SmartyPig contest shown in Figure 5-9. The goal of the monthly trivia contest, which runs on both Twitter (`@SmartyPig`) and Facebook (`www.facebook.com/SmartyPig`), is to create recognition for the company and its services, incentivize current customers, and incidentally to draw new visitors to its Web site, which, through its partnership with an FDIC insured bank, offers online savings accounts.

Answers to the trivia question are at SmartyPig.com. Winners, chosen randomly from those who respond correctly, receive a $100 gift card. SmartyPig announces the winners on its blog with a humorous video of the selection process. Rules are also posted on the blog `http://blog.smartypig.com/read/smartypig-march-madness-twitter-and-facebook-contests`.

You can find many more game ideas at the Mashable posting at `http://mashable.com/2009/08/11/social-media-contests`. The ideas range from simple to complex, but they will start your wheels turning.

Figure 5-9: SmartyPig teases and then announces its contest in a series of timed tweets. Winners appear on the blog.

Courtesy SmartyPig, LLC

Microsites

Microsites, which the Interactive Advertising Bureau also calls "brand conversation hubs," are branded environments specific to a particular product, line, or brand. Often used in conjunction with a new product introduction or special promotion, microsites may facilitate social-media-style activities specific to that project. Often, user conversations or user-generated content contributions are incorporated into the site.

Figure 5-10 shows an interactive microsite that was incorporated into an integrated campaign for a benefits administration company. The company wanted commuters to ask their employers to set up commuter benefits programs. The overall marketing plan also included a contest to win free commuting passes, social media integration, and teams of people who handed out literature at bus and subway stations.

Figure 5-10: This microsite was part of an integrated campaign to encourage employers to set up benefit programs for employees who commute.

Commuter Nation and Commuter Check are registered trademarks of Edenred Corporation.
Campaign created and implemented by One Pica.

When commuters visited the Web site, they learned about benefits available and could enter the contest by filling out a form. In addition, they were invited to e-mail a link to their employers and send links to their friends via e-mail, Facebook, or Twitter. The results were phenomenal.

Many microsites incorporate highly focused video presentations to launch a new product, turn a sale into an event, provide "how-to" instruction, or target specific demographic groups.

Brainstorm ways that an integrated media campaign might succeed for you. Diagram it and figure out what you'll measure to assess your accomplishments.

Masi Bikes rolls along with social media

A small bicycle manufacturer in California, Masi Bicycles became a division of Haro Bicycles in 2004. It designs and produces road bicycles as well as city, commuting, and lifestyle bikes, and parts. Masi sells primarily to bike shops (go to `www.masibikes.com` for bikes or `www.brevM.com` for parts) but also some clothing and accessories to consumers at `www.masibikes.com/store`.

Brand manager Tim Jackson is one of two people assigned to Masi, of 30 total at Haro. Although the Masi brand had been in Italy for 70 years and in the United States since the 1970s, it had little market recognition at the time Haro purchased the brand. Jackson's task was to bring the brand back. In 2005, when Jackson realized his "marketing budget was too anemic to support the kinds of growth I was hoping for," he knew he had to find another way to get the Masi name out and find people to build a Masi community. "Ultimately, social media provided an opportunity to level the playing field with our competitors, allowing us to look larger than we are."

Jackson started by creating an accessible persona at his personal blog, Masiguy.com. It was so successful that the company now has its own blog at each Web site (a blog posting for Masi Bikes at `www.masibikes.com/2009/12/masi-shirts-are-in-stock` appears in the nearby figure) plus matching Facebook, Twitter, and RSS accounts, and a video channel for Masi. "The best form of targeting I've found is to participate in conversations where consumers are hanging out. I want to drive consumers into shops for the products, and I want to develop relationships of trust with the retailers and consumers both." Jackson writes less formal conversations on Facebook and Twitter, and

more detailed information on the blogs. He's also used the blogs for surveys and to invite participants to shape the future of the brand.

"I have numerous comments from people who say they bought a bike because of something they saw on a blog, or elsewhere in social media areas. I have shops tell me they bought a bike for a consumer because they came in the shop and said they 'heard it from the Masiguy.' Those things are like gold to me and I cherish each one." The results come in sales. "In the first two years I was with the company, sales doubled. Within four years, they quadrupled. To me, those stats are the ones that matter most."

Jackson spends a few hours a day on social media, much of it after hours: "I live in the space." It pays off, he insists. "Consumers have so many choices now that the winner is often the one they like better, rather than the one with the best price."

Masi also runs a few print ads in magazines, does some limited banner advertising, and sends a few press releases, along with many trade shows and events. "But mostly, I just talk a lot!" laughs Jackson. "The community of Masi fans has taken on a large role in making noise for the brand. People tend to eat up the minutiae that we take for granted, so exposing them to the details feeds their curiosity much better than I ever dreamed."

"I wish I had known it was going to be this easy and this fun," he adds. "In the beginning I was so scared of getting it wrong, but I have learned that the community is actually very forgiving and is willing to help you learn and grow. . . . Engaging people in conversations and treating them with respect will get you a lot further than you might think, even though it is common sense."

(continued)

"Conversations are going on about your brand/product/service whether you're a part of it or not. So why not be involved and have a role in shaping the outcome? You can bet that if you don't [participate] in this social media environment, your competition will. Why give them the chance to take your customers away? Another important piece of advice is to just have fun with it. I know it sounds like a cliché, but it really shows when you are having a good time or are passionate — that's always a good thing."

URLs for Masi Bikes

www.masibikes.com

http://masiguy.blogspot.com

www.facebook.com/pages/Masi-Bicycles/162818742818

http://twitter.com/MasiBicycles

http://themasiguypodcast.wordpress.com

http://feeds.feedburner.com/MasiBikes

www.brevM.com

www.masiguy.com

www.facebook.com/pages/Brev-M/196260872441

http://twitter.com/BrevM

http://vimeo.com/user1984344

http://feeds.feedburner.com/Brevm

Courtesy Masi Bicycles/Brev M Parts