Week 3: Social Content: Multimedia

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This next chapter and the one that follows, "Reviews, Ratings, and Recommendations," are all about the content that people create and share on the Social Web. This includes content that relates to your product, service, and brand. In this chapter, you're going to look at pictures, videos, and podcasts, and at the tools people use to produce and publish them. For now, these tools are free — at this point, interruptive online advertising remains the primary business model. For how long is anybody's guess. As you work through this chapter, think about the difference between the content you are interested in and the ads that appear nearby. What if the ads went away? Who would pay for these services? Would anyone pay at all? Perhaps more importantly, who would use these tools to advertise?

Chapter Contents

Advertising and the Social Web

Next to MySpace and Facebook, photo- and video-sharing sites such as Flickr (owned by Yahoo), Photobucket (owned by MySpace), and YouTube (owned by Google) are likely the next best-known social media related sites. To get an idea of the apparent business and marketing value of these sites, consider that MySpace was purchased for half a billion dollars (in really big, round numbers). YouTube, Photobucket, and Flickr together were sold for a combined 2 billion, again give or take.

The point that is often overlooked is that these values are primarily reflective of the *traditional media* valuation these sites. How so? At this point, the primary revenue model — for any of these sites — is the same model that has powered *traditional advertising* for 50 years. They all draw a big crowd, and they all feature — in some form — interruptive advertising. Some of the content platforms complement their basic (free) offering with premium services available for a fee, but the vast majority of users are not paying for these services with anything other than their attention. These are the new billboards, magazines, and TV stations. In this sense, using these sites as advertising platforms is *not* an example of "social media," though the *content* featured within the sites certainly is. It's an odd juxtaposition.

A new business model is coming. The conversations and media contributions powering leading social media sites aren't being directly monetized — nor are the acts of creating them. If you believe that interruptive media will become less effective as people further ignore it, or block it altogether, then *a business model based on some aspect of participation rather than eyeballs has to emerge.* Look back to the examples of the heat maps in Chapter 2, "The Marketer's Dilemma." If people ignore interruptive ads and at the same time install blockers to suppress more aggressive forms of interruptive advertising, then sooner or later advertisers themselves will force a change to the underlying business models of the majority of "social" sites. If an ad falls in the forest and no one notices…did it really make an impression? Probably not.

A Note of Caution

Throughout this chapter, and indeed throughout this book, I talk about the use of social media from the marketer's perspective. I cannot stress enough the importance of using social media *appropriately*. When the first websites were created, and the first banners were launched, the idea of using the platform for pop-ups and page takeovers wasn't on most people's minds, though clearly it was on the minds of a few. As pop-ups proliferated, so did pop-up blockers. People installed spam filters and pop-up blockers and the problems more or less went away, at least for those who installed such tools. The *Social Web will not be so kind.* Offend the collective, and expect a much more vigorous response than the installation of a filter. See the related sidebar, "Paid Blogging Gone Bad," for more about repercussions following the inappropriate use of the Social Web.

The Multimedia Channels

Presented in the following sections are the core content channels, built up initially around consumer generated media and now expanded to include the multimedia content that you can create. Channels covered include blogs and a section on corporate blogs, as well as microblogs, photo and video sharing, and podcasting.

Blogging

One of the easiest entries onto to the Social Web — and into the use of social media — is through a blog. No matter what your motivation or point of view, you have every right to create a blog. I mention this because blogging is one of the areas where a company-sponsored effort can be really effective, provided of course that you fully disclose the company connection. Think about it from a customer's perspective: The blog, properly identified and actively used (by you) creates a great channel through which you can tell customers what you're doing, and invite them to share their thoughts. It's a simple, easy, low-cost approach to social media..

Of course, this assumes that you are OK with whatever it is that people say: you really can't control the conversation on a blog other than through the limited enforcement of profanity bans or similar very basic and well-established policies.

> *"The Internet interprets censorship as damage and routes around it."*
>
> — John Gilmore, 1993.

In fact you don't even want to control it: the point of the blog is to create a free exchange so that you can learn what your customers (and potential customers) like, dislike, value, etc. This drives directly back to the points I made in earlier chapters: the Social Web is a place where you can learn about current issues and opportunities, and where you can enlist the brains and emotions of your audience to help you develop your next-generation products and services. The basic requirements for beginning an effective blogging strategy are covered in the following sections. For more information about blogging, use Google and search for "How to Blog." You'll find plenty of good help.

Transparency

Transparency is key to an effective corporate blog. First, you want the benefits of your blogging program to accrue to *you*, and the best way to do that is by making sure that your name is on it. Second, by being transparent you prevent the kinds of very negative publicity that will (not "can" but "will") occur in response to the use of fake or paid blogs. With regard to paid blogs — a program through which you offer a payment or incentive in exchange for a blogger writing about you — this is a strategy to avoid. It will always almost always result in a disclosure problem.

Despite your best intentions, it is rare that a paid blogger actually discloses having been paid. As artisans, bloggers seek to increase the value of their reputations, and so there is always a tension around disclosure when bloggers are paid by those they blog about, just as there would be if a newspaper reporter was paid by the subject of an article. The result is that a forthright disclosure is often weakened, or skipped altogether. When outed, a predictable blowback results. In that event, *you* will inevitably be held accountable. After all, who do you suppose your critics will point the finger at: you and your flagship brand …or "Joe up until now unknown blogger?"

Paid Blogging Gone Bad

The Social Web is quite effective when it comes to "outing" social campaigns that are not all what they may appear. A blog-based campaign such as Wal-Mart's "Wal-Marting across America" that I referenced in Chapter 2 is but one well-known blow-up.

Unfortunately, there are many others. These types of campaigns — in which what appears to be "neutral" content is actually sponsored — occur more often than you might think and by firms from whom you'd expect better. Cisco's "Human Network" campaign was called out for a lack of transparency by Jeff Jarvis. HP's compensation to bloggers won them a 'finalist' position in a SXSW panel featuring the worst social media campaigns.

Understand these are great brands with smart partners: if they can make this mistake, it's worth pointing out again here. Don't pay bloggers. If the blogger happens to be your own employee or contractor, that's fine. Just be sure that you always disclose the relationship. Don't create blogs that are less than 100 percent transparent.

Ironically, the practice of slipping sponsored content into neutral channels — for example, creating what appears to be news (and paying for it) isn't new. In August 2008, *Advertsing Age* reported that the sixth annual MS&L Marketing Management Survey found 19% of the CMOs and marketing directors interviewed said they had purchased advertising in return for a news story. Moreover, 53% said "the marketing industry as a whole is not following ethical guidelines in the new-media realm." Social Web citizens expect a higher standard.

Willingness to Listen

From a marketing perspective, listening is a critical skill. This sounds so obvious, yet for many advertisers, listening is rarely the focus of the day-to-day work. Instead, the focus is on "tell," on making potential buyers aware of what you have to offer.

On the Social Web listening pays big dividends. Not only does listening — expressed, for example, through your blog posts that make an actual reference to what one of your readers said — help build a relationship with your audience, it provides you with a rich stream of information that you can use to gain a competitive advantage. Sam Lawrence, CMO for Jive Software, talks about the importance of listening:

> *Marketing needs to be released from being solely responsible for changing perceptions or driving leads. They should be enabling the organization to make meaningful, positive customer experiences and connections. This may seem like a subtle shift but when Marketing can feel comfortable becoming listeners instead of blasting sales messages, dramatic change ensues.*
>
> — Sam Lawrence, CMO, Jive Software

The change that Sam notes, moving from talker, from spreader of messages, to a *listener* is a key insight into getting the most from the Social Web. Again, think back to what you worked on in Chapter 6, "Touchpoint Analysis." Your marketing efforts on the Social Web are *just one part* of an overall, integrated marketing effort. If you only use the Social Web to listen — and then apply what you learn internally to make a better product or create a more delightful customer experience — how would *that* change things?

Operations and Marketing

You may wonder how the combination of Operations and Marketing within your organization relate to blogging. Building on the preceding discussion about "being a better listener," consider that one of the most effective uses of a corporate blog is as *a channel to effect internal change*, in the pursuit of a better customer experience. Properly implemented, a blog opens a channel between your customers and the people in your organization who can translate what is being posted into a better customer experience. The improved customer experience — whether moving from bad to good, or from good to great — will surely drive a stronger and more beneficial presence on the Social Web.

How do you leverage a strengthened presence on the Social Web? By linking Marketing and Operations, and by making sure that what your customers are telling you is being translated into action.

Willingness to Act

In the end, it's the translation into action that separates the winners from the "also-rans." Social media — precisely because it is "listener oriented" in a way that is dramatically different from traditional outreach channels — will surely raise the visibility of opportunities and challenges within your organization to new levels. While it may make good headlines for social media advocates, turning up the heat without a program to tap that feedback is a recipe for disaster. The goal is to use social media to drive business objectives and increase the effectiveness of your *entire* organization.

Before proposing the addition of a social media effort, and in particular using a channel like a blog that invites direct feedback, be sure to connect with and gain the buy-in of your Operations, IT, and HR teams. They are key constituents in the successful implementation of social media.

Corporate Blogs

Today you'll be reviewing a set of "corporate" blogs, looking at how they are used and getting a sense for the time commitment required to maintain them. I've picked three blogs from CMOs at firms involved in social media and from the companies themselves. The fourth blog you'll get to look at — The TED Blog — is included simply to give you something to think about.

The CMO blogs will give you an idea of how you can create a blog associated with the work that you do, and then use this to build relationships with colleagues and customers. This type of blog can be really helpful in increasing your social media knowledge, and will provide you with solid experience in using the blogging channel as a content producer. The corporate blogs selected are simple, straightforward examples. Some of the corporate blogs are handled and managed internally while others have been implemented through the use of a white-label platform — in this case, Salesforce.com.

> **Tip:** Wikipedia provides two excellent resources if you're interested in learning about setting up a blog. The first Wikipedia entry listed below provides a comprehensive listing of blogging software. The second provides tips and typical uses in business, and includes a reference to a Technorati list of top-rated corporate blogs.
>
> Blogging Software: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogging_software`
>
> Corporate Blogging: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_blog`
>
> There are additional resources and professionals as well. Using Google, search for "corporate blogging."

Monday's One-Hour Exercise

> **Tip:** A set of worksheets covering this week's exercises can be found in the appendix of this book. In addition to these printed worksheets, you can also download electronic copies and access related resources at the website accompanying this book. Complete information regarding these resources and the website is included in the appendix.

Today you're going to spend an hour reviewing the selected blogs. You'll then develop a plan for including this channel — if applicable — in your social media marketing plan.

> **Note:** These are active blogs serving current communities. Please do not leave "test" messages. If you see a post of interest, however, do participate. After all, that's why they are there.

GoBigAlways

`http://www.gobigalways.com`

Created by Jive Software CMO Sam Lawrence, shown in Figure 10.1, GoBigAlways is the blog Sam uses to post his thoughts on the development and application of social media. Note especially the disclosure that Sam provides:

> *About Me*
>
> *I am currently the CMO at Jive Software and a frequent speaker, blogger and work-a-holic. Although I write about social software, my opinions are biased in favor of Jive's collaboration and community solutions. I live in Portland, OR with my wife and two sons.*

This kind of disclosure not only prevents any appearance of impropriety, it actually gives Sam license to talk about Jive. Sam's credibility, therefore, transfers to the brand, just as the marketplace stature of Jive conveys a sense of "expert status" to Sam.

Photo by Eliot Ng, licensed under Creative Commons. Likeness of Sam used with permission of Sam.

Figure 10.1 Sam Lawrence, JiveSoftware CMO, with the famed Enterprise Octopus

Bazaarblog

`http://www.bazaarblog.com/`

The Bazaarvoice blog is a straight-forward implementation of a corporate blog. Fully disclosed, fully transparent, and filled with useful information about Bazaarvoice and its key people, this blog is read by customers, potential customers, and importantly by the caliber of employees that power Bazaarvoice. Remember what I said about attracting and retaining the best talent? Here it is, in action.

Influence 2.0

http://blog.cymfony.com/

From Cymfony CMO Jim Nail, Influence 2.0 covers a variety of issues related to implementing and measuring social media and its impact on contemporary business.

The TED Blog

http://blog.ted.com/

From the annual conference, The TED Blog, shown in Figure 10.2, is a great series of thought-provoking posts by leading thinkers. Later this week, you'll visit the TED Talks podcast site. *Caution: I listed this one last as otherwise you could end up spending your entire hour here. Don't say I didn't warn you. To get the maximum effect of exposure to TED, consider staying at a Holiday Inn Express this evening. You just might wake as a brain surgeon.*
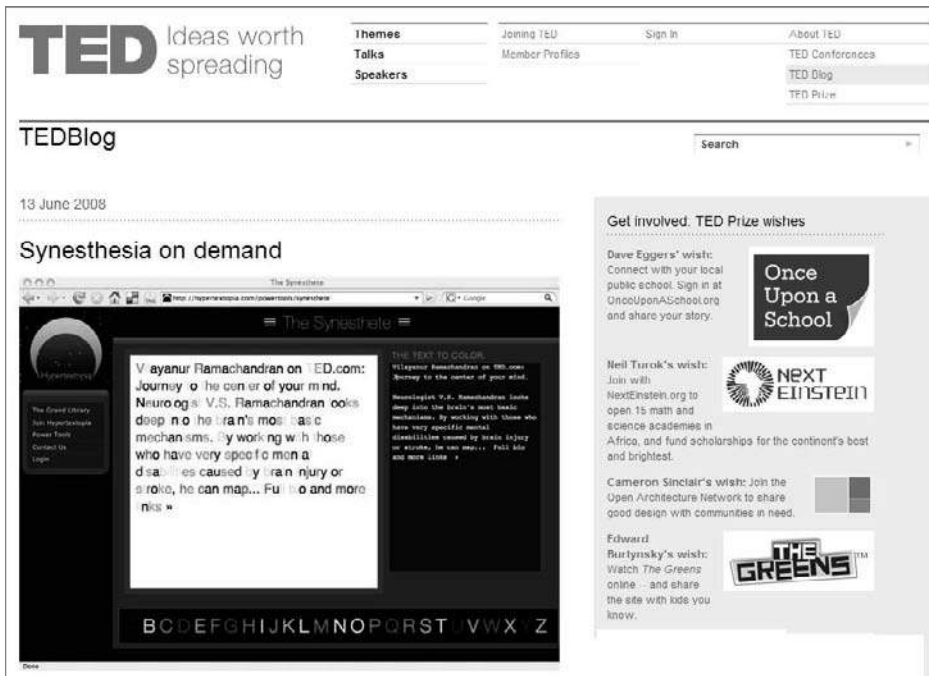
Figure 10.2 The TED Blog

As you review the blogs cited, consider the following:

• What is it that seems most useful about these examples?

• How is disclosure handled? How does disclosure strengthen the blog and its message?

• How often is new content posted? Which items posted generate the most comments (or the most passionate comments)?

- How does the company handle the discussion within the comments? Does the company participate?

- How could you use a blog as a part of your own marketing effort? Who would write it? Who would *listen* to it?

Monday's Wrap-Up

Today you reviewed three distinct examples of blogs related to marketing. Sam's personal blog is used as a sounding board for his ideas and often features the products of his employer. Bazaarvoice's Bazaarblog is an internally supported platform that features the ideas of its key people along with announcements of interest to current and potential customers. Jim's "Influencer 2.0" blog, along with the TED blog, are solid examples of the use of blogging as a way to extend your thoughts and then validate them based on comments and reader participation. These are the kinds of ways that you can implement and use blogging as an introduction into social media.

Microblogs

> *"Twitter is the gateway drug to social media."*
>
> — Jim Storer, Sr. Director, Social Media Strategy, Mzinga.

My friend Steve Golab, co-founder of the interactive firm FG SQUARED, spotted this on Twitter. At first, I didn't quite get it — I was new to Twitter at the time. (For the record, I was the 12,566,112th person to sign up for Twitter.) I have been using social tools and networks for a few years: most networks struck me as useful, but also possessing a distinct learning curve. Beyond the social norms and mastery of activities particular to Facebook, MySpace, Linked In, and other specific sites, the interfaces are generally complex, but then, so are real-life social interactions and conventions. Take Facebook as an example: you've got an inbox, notifications, applications, status updates, and more. This isn't a knock — simply a recognition that, like Microsoft Word, there is a lot there whether you use it all or not.

Not so with Twitter, shown in Figure 10.3. An input box, a submit button, 140 characters of your choice…and the whole world. I learned to use Twitter with relative ease. Seeing the value took a bit longer, but eventually I got it. Now, I'm hooked.

With *microblogs* you post quick, short bursts of text or video, as others around you do the same. You offer a new post, and others comment. You see something interesting, and you comment. Twitter has all the complexity of walking into a room full of people at a party. You start by listening, and then introduce yourself and get involved. Microblogs boil social networking down to its most essential elements: a post, a comment, and an indication of relationships. You choose to listen (or not) to people around you, and they do the same with you. In addition to Twitter, services like Seesmic, Jaiku, Pownce, and the status update tools in Facebook, MySpace, and similar are all forms of microblogging.
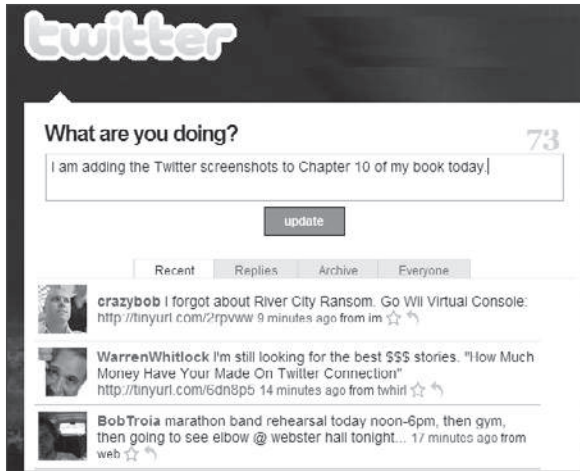
Figure 10.3 Twitter

Twitterholic: Quantifying the Chatter

If you'd like a quick look into the numbers of people using Twitter, look no further than Twitterholic.com. You'll find the most active members in terms of posts ("tweets"), friends, and followers. You'll also see the order in which members joined Twitter. For example, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone is member number 13; Robert Scoble is roughly number 13 thousand, and I am roughly number 13 million. (`http://twitterholic.com`)
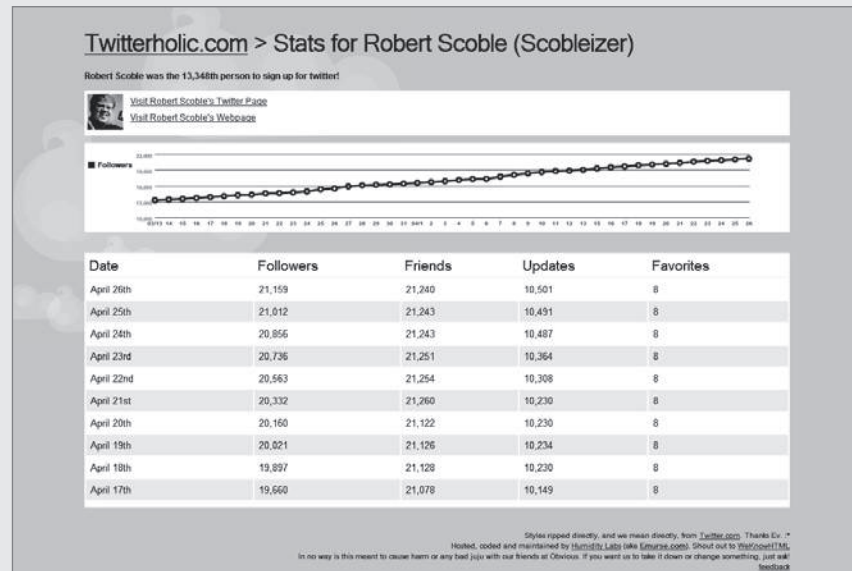
Using a microblog for marketing is pretty simple — but like anything on the Social Web, there are rules, and there are consequences for not following them. Spamming will land you in hot water in minutes. For example, while it may be tempting, do not randomly start contacting people to build a list of followers, only to then turn around and post about yourself and your products. This is considered "spam" and as noted will quickly get you (at best) shunned or (at worst) your account closed.

Twitter: Can I do business here?

Without a doubt, yes. Lionel Menchaca, Chief Blogger for Dell, reported on the Direct 2 Dell blog that "Not too long ago, we added @DellSmBizOffers to the mix. We recently surpassed $500,000 in revenue through Twitter."

Expanding the application of microblogs beyond text, multimedia is fast becoming a *conversational* reality. Seesmic is an international community built around a simple premise: discourse. Unlike blogs, social networks like Facebook, or Twitter — all of which are more or less text-based propositions, Seesmic is video. It's simple, too: if you want to get an idea of just how close we are to stepping from text (blogs) + voice (phone) to video (integrated motion and multimedia) as a conversational medium, Seesmic will give you a good indication. If your PC has a video camera connected to it, you can post a video conversation in just about the same time as it takes to write one. You can see my Seesmic account in Figure 10.4.
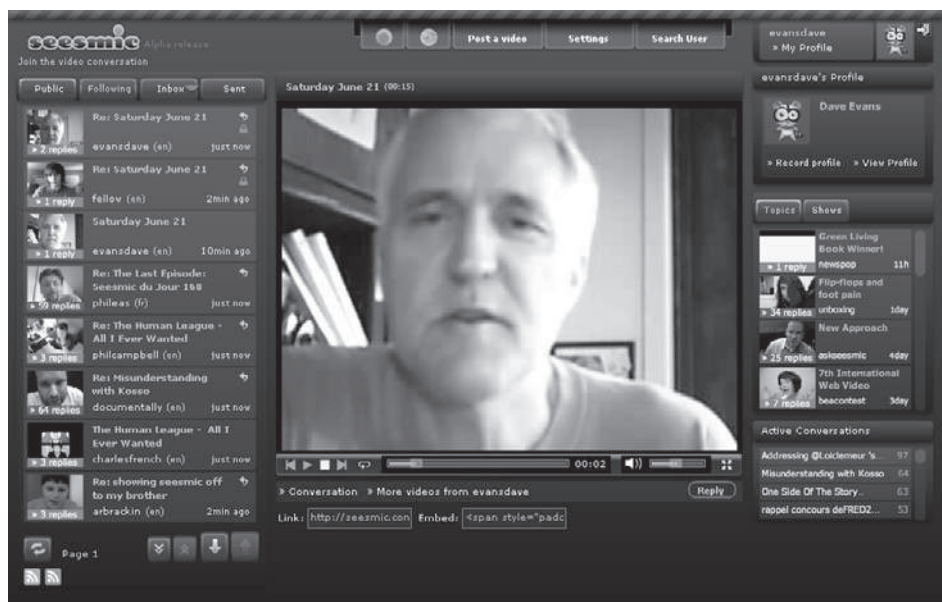
Figure 10.4   A Typical Seesmic Account

Like other forms of social media, microblogs can be used for listening (brand intelligence), talking (outreach), or both. Seesmic uses its own platform for video-based customer support. Firms like Comcast monitor Twitter, looking for references to their brand. They can spot problems, which is useful in and of itself. Even more important, though, is that they quickly spot problems being talked about in a highly connected social environment. Once a problem is identified, they can contact the originator of the post and work toward resolving it, *which also often occurs in public*. Because Microblogs are a "real time' stream, the problem can often be identified and resolved before the negative conversation has a chance to spread to more permanent media like a blog, a forum, or (gasp!) an *article or a book*.

Tuesday's One-Hour Exercise

If you're not using Twitter or a similar microblogging service, today you're going to start. In the first part of this exercise, the assumption is that you'll be using Twitter: you can adapt it to any microblogging tool you prefer.

> **Tip:** In addition to Twitter, check out Friendfeed, Identi.ca, Jaiku, Plurk, and Pownce. Each has its own following. You'll find a complete listing of these services in the references section of this book. If you're new to Twitter, TwitterHandbook.com provides a great starting point. Blogging Software:
>
> `http://www.twitterhandbook.com`

Today, as you explore the suggested microblogs, consider the following:

- What is it that seems most useful about microblogs?
- How are marketers using these tools?
- Compared with a blog, do microblogs feel more like communities than publishing tools?
- How could you use a microblog as a part of your own marketing effort? Who would update it? Who would *use* it?

Twitter

If you haven't signed up, you can do so by going to `http://twitter.com`. It will take you about 30 seconds.

After you sign up, you'll be wondering what to do: this is normal. Search for friends using the built-in search feature, or let Twitter have a peek at your contacts list. The first thing you'll notice is the "public timeline" and a whole stream of posts marked "less than 5 seconds ago." Ignore this. It's like standing in the middle of the Astrodome and trying to make sense of the individual conversations of the 50 thousand people seated around you, made worse by the fact that on Twitter there are between a hundred and a thousand times as many people talking!

Having signed up at Twitter (or your preferred microblog), go to your Home tab. Search for the following:

- NY Times

- BBC

- Brooklyn Museum

- Southwest Airlines

- Zappos

- While you're at it, search for me! (Dave Evans)

Click "Follow" on anything that looks interesting (which is to say, any of the first five...) and you'll soon start seeing a stream (e.g., news updates) coming from these sources.

You can send email invites to friends, or search for friends or colleagues who are using Twitter already. Find them, and follow them. You can add your own thoughts to the conversation by simply typing into the box and clicking Update. Pretty soon you'll be part of what's happening on Twitter.

So what you can do? Post a question. Post a thought. Post an event. As a marketer, keep a couple of things in mind, though: Other than the public timeline, which as noted is not generally looked at, your generic posts will be visible only to those who have opted to follow you. If you post only about yourself and what you are selling, expect your list of followers to decline, all the way to zero.

Seesmic

Next, go to Seesmic. You can view all of the public videos without an account; there are many more that are visible only to members. You'll notice that the video conversations are in a variety of languages, too. What's that tell you? I'd suggest joining, simply so that you can follow the "askseesmic" video conversations, created by Seesmic staff and members. In these, you'll find a really interesting example of the way that video conversations can be used to provide a very nontraditional — and highly effective — approach to customer support.

> **Reference URLS**
> http://www.seesmic.com
> http://www.seesmic.com/askseesmic

Tuesday's Wrap-Up

As with any social tool, the first step in learning to use it as a marketer is learning to use it as a participant. Get to know the rules, and take the time to understand why this particular channel exists. Look at what other businesses are doing. What seems acceptable? Follow their lead. Look especially at the kinds of actions that irritate people or get members ticked off...or kicked off. Don't do those things. Because *communities* — collections of followers and followees — are built voluntarily, you can actually use

microblogs, just as with blogs, for business and promotional activities. If people don't want hear from you, they'll simply stop following or block you. Good conduct will minimize that.

Photo and Video Sharing

As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." So it is with social content: a photo or video can convey very precise meaning and can engage an audience in ways that words alone will sometimes fail to do. This is particularly important when you consider the multitasking 'scan' oriented consumption of digital content. Adding visual elements transforms the conveyance of a message into a quick, scan-friendly experience.

What are the kinds of things that you can do — as a marketer — with visual content? For starters, you can simply show your products — although this is among the least effective applications of *social media*. To make the most of any social channel, start by creating content that involves your audience rather than simply talking at them. Then, extend this by integrating your content through cross channel campaigns that tap your other social efforts. Don't look now, but later in the chapter you'll see an example of this type of integration in the "Brooklyn Museum" Featured Case.

The Entertainer's Secret

Don't limit the use of your own content to photos and videos: you can use audio clips, too. In addition to written testimonials about its product, the web site supporting "The Entertainer's Secret," a throat spray for musicians and speakers, includes *audio testimonials* from its satisfied customers.

http://www.entertainers-secret.com/Testimonials.html

Want to "see" this product in action? Listen to these voices.

Got TV? You can use online channels — which are often more lenient with regard to their acceptance standards — to present a spot that has been made expressly for the Web. For example, you may have a special cut you might not have been able to show on TV but which — online — would generate favorable, appropriate exposure. Pictures and video are also helpful when offering instructional or similar content that shows a complex operation or otherwise illustrates written documentation. In that case, a photo or video that you make yourself can be perfect. When you do it in such a way that it can be passed around or easily picked up and dropped into a forum or blog by your customers, you further increase the likelihood that your message will be spread around.

When using social channels, you really want to leverage the "social" component and that usually means "audience participation." Creating what is essentially a catalog isn't necessarily a *social* experience. Look back at the list of channels available to you: TV, print, catalogs, and direct mail to name a few. You already have plenty of places to show and tell about your product or service. Don't short-change the Social Web by viewing it as one more "talk" outlet. Instead, use the combination of visual elements and audience participation to show your product or service *in action*. Let people see what other people are doing. Note here as well that I'm not talking about showing models or other artificial representations. Encourage real people, using content that they made, to spread the word about your products and services. *Tap your evangelists.*

Beyond the portrayal of your products and services (by you or by someone else), you can also use visual content to document events, parties, openings, cause related events, or product launches — all of which are things that you participate in at the brand level. This seems obvious, but it is still the minority of marketers that go beyond a single photo on the website of, for example, the CEO cutting a ribbon as next year's model is rolled out. How about uploading the entire set of pictures from the launch party to Flickr? What about uploading a video of runners crossing the line at a company sponsored charity run, and then tying that to your corporate blog or community newsletter to bring out the *stories* of the people involved? That is the social stuff that builds an audience.

Yes, you need to think this out in advance: you may need release forms, for example, to show an event video publicly. But it's worth the effort: if there was a video of *you* crossing the line after running a marathon, wouldn't you send the link to your friends? Most people would, and a simple Tell-a-Friend button would make this very easy. Combined, the value of your campaign or event sponsorship goes up as more people view the event and hear directly from the people who participated in it. This is the "social" part of "social media," and ironically the part that many marketers miss.

Wednesday's One-Hour Exercise

Today you look at some examples of professional and user-generated content that feature pictures and videos of products in use, instructional tips, and examples of the kinds of content that consumers will create to share with others. As you work through these examples, keep in mind that none of this social content exists alone: it is all supported in multiple other channels.

For today's exercise, do the following:

- Go to sites indicated and search for the suggested terms. Review each item, and think about how it is being used and who is viewing it.
- Having looked at the examples, imagine two video or photo programs that you could add to your social media program and then write these ideas down. For one, consider how you might use video to show your customers (and potential

customers) how to get more out what you offer. For the second, consider how you would encourage your current customers to create visual content that could be shared in order to create a positive "lift" element for your brand, product, or service.

YouTube

Search for: Instructional Video

Amazingly, and one of the best proof points for the impact that social media can have is an "instructional video" from Soulja Boy. If it isn't listed on the first page, then refine the search by adding "Soulja Boy" to the search terms. The instructional video that accompanies the track "How to Crank That" has been viewed over 30 million times. *This is Super Bowl caliber exposure, at considerably lower cost.*

> **Reference URLs**
> Soulja Boy - How to Crank That (32M)
> `http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLGLum5SyKQ`
> `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soulja_Boy`

The "Soulja Boy" video is a standout: most "social video" is viewed a few hundred, a few thousand, or maybe tens of thousands of times. That may seem small, especially in comparison to TV where millions of views is the norm. Remember, however, that online instructional videos are generally viewed by someone *seeking* that information: as a result, the number of actions that lead to a conversion can be much higher by proportion than you'd otherwise think. Consider the following as examples:

Search For: Home Depot DIY

Here you'll find videos ranging from the Home Depot-sponsored "The Basics of Paint" to Joe & Joe's "Making a Photo Backdrop." The relatively light viewership (in the hundreds to thousands of views range) reflects the relatively specialized applications. The "Backdrop" video has great information and is useful for any amateur photographer wanting to take better pictures in a home studio. Within that audience, the video has a solid circulation. One of the things to keep in mind when considering the production of a video series, or, encouraging or facilitating actual consumer-generated social content is the importance of knowing exactly who your audience is, and what *they* need.

> **Reference URLS**
> Home Depot - Basics of Paint
> `http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8DfgWjACNQ`
> Joe & Joe
> `http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJrH2Dj8oGc`

Search For: Home Depot 25,000 Card

Moving beyond the basics of instruction, Home Depot leveraged the combination of its home makeover campaign centerpiece — a $25,000 gift card give-away — with consumer-generated media by inviting consumers to create a video showing why they should win the prize. With consumers involved, the number of videos — and the number of views — went way up. The video project then continued with the actual remodel. If you look around YouTube, you'll find lots of Home Depot-produced videos presenting its remodeling program.

> **Reference URLs**
> $25,000 Remodel Contest
> `http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U68J_TefJgs`

Flickr

Turning to photos, take a look at Flickr. If you are already using a photo-sharing site, you can adapt this exercise to whatever photo-sharing site you prefer.

Search Terms: Home Depot DIY

Here you'll find photos of projects as well as photos taken on "family days" at Home Depot where kids are invited to build basic wood-working projects. In this example, the permitted use of cameras in the store results in parents posting images of the kinds of family-oriented activities that typify these Home Depot construction days. Because these are posted to personal Flickr accounts, the assumption is fairly safe that they are being shared among family and friends, furthering the spread of the very positive aspect of the Home Depot brand. *This kind of content additionally serves to offset the posted content of Home Depot detractors.* Think back to Chapter 7, "Influence and Measurement," and the Net Promoter score: your online reputation is determined by the difference in the number of people talking positively versus those talking negatively. Without this positive content resulting from 'Family Days" at Home Depot, the instructional content and the contests, the *negative* efforts of the detractors would dominate the conversation. By participating in the social aspects of your brand as it is built online you can prevent that from happening. Again, you can't prevent detractors: they have as much right to the Social Web as you do. You can however, by participating yourself, *prevent them from being the sole social voice of your brand*.

In Figure 10.5, you can see photos taken in various Whole Foods Market and then posted online. I include this example here because it's worth thinking about the policies that your own firm may have when it comes to photography or video. Whole Foods Markets does not allow photography inside its stores without explicit permission. At the same time, it's quite likely given some of the comments that the people who took the photos were unaware that the policy existed *before* taking the photo.
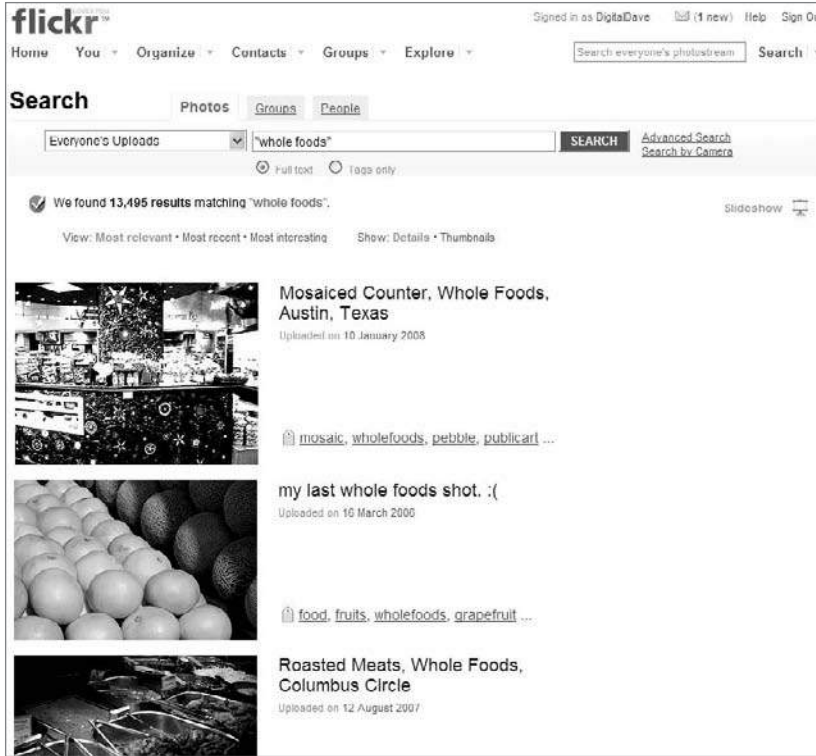
Figure 10.5 Whole Foods Market on Flickr

I'm not suggesting that merchants like Whole Foods — who go to great lengths to create an incredible customer experience — adopt and post policies like that for "Area 51," shown in Figure 10.6. The point is instead that it is becoming an experiential disconnect — think here in terms of touchpoints — for customers who are very used to creating and sharing content online — to be barred from doing the same thing in real life. When cameras are built into phones, and uploading taking one click, people want to document experiences. What people see…people share. Being told "no" works *against* your social media efforts.

Figure 10.6 Area 51 Photo Policy

The reality is that Flickr lists well in excess of 10,000 photos uploaded and tagged "Whole Foods." Many of them are interior shots, and many of the comments include phrases to the effect "as I was taking this shot, I heard a voice heading my way saying something about the prohibition of photos…." Individual policies are, of course, a matter for each firm to decide on its own. Suffice it is to say, though, that with over 10,000 photos at one photo-sharing site alone along with a number of comments that refer negatively to the photo policy, discouraging photos and the sharing of the Whole Foods experience is not likely to make the most of social media and what the Social Web can do. The Whole Foods experience is built on multiple touchpoints. For me personally, it's the passion of the Associates something that can't be photographed or easily copied — and not the way the oranges are stacked — that make the Whole Foods experience what it is. Even more important, though, is that policies that prevent the sharing of experiences *tip the content on the Social Web in favor of your competitors and detractors.* Unlike your loyal customers — who typically respect your wishes and put the camera away — your competitors and detractors are going to go into stealth mode and take the pictures anyway. The social conversation will be, as a result, decidedly one sided.

As a final example, look at this short instructional video for a niche, low-cost product that really benefits from a video. In this case, the product is a new type of in-line skate. This has been included simply to establish that you don't need fancy, professionally produced content to be *effective*. This casual video — viewed over 100,000 times — shows an easy way to get the hang of these skates — thereby encouraging mastery among new riders — and shows the proper use of basic safety equipment as well.

Reference URL
FreeLine Skates
`http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgh0sqGacnU`

Wednesday's Wrap-Up

Today you looked at videos and photos, and added to your plan options with both an internal program and a consumer-generated program. Your emerging plan options now include a blog and/or microblog used for outreach, issue resolution, or product research, and visual components that directly involve your customers in the beneficial conveyance of your message.

As you are considering selected social components for your marketing program, another aspect of social media is likely emerging: it's about smaller numbers, added up, rather than larger numbers done all at once. Consider the Home Depot videos: most are in the 100 to 1,000 views range, with some reaching into the 10 thousands. Unlike "Soulja Boy," and certainly in contrast to TV, few are in the millions range. This is one the reasons that your creative agency or media buyers may be slow to roll out social programs: they are used to — and set up for — buying large amounts of exposure. There is nothing wrong with that, and large exposure campaigns are still an important aspect

of an overall marketing effort for most marketers. It is, however, something to keep in mind as you move toward implementation.

Where traditional media is often centered on awareness or perception, social media is about *influence*. If you gain real influence, one person at a time, and that person tells three people, your social efforts significantly enhance your awareness and perception efforts. Think back to the purchase funnel and the social feedback cycle and the use of TV to build awareness or paid search near the point of sale to drive closure. Social media — active in the consideration phase — is about adding credible influence, suggestion, persuasion, tips, and new uses — the things that a potential customer will find most useful and, therefore, the things that are most likely to create an additional use (purchase) or help a "fence sitter" make a decision favorable to you. Both of these assume that the social content is positive: if the content is negative — recall the Kryptonite bike lock videos (search YouTube if you've never seen them) — then the result can be exactly the opposite of what you really want. In the end, social media is an adjunct, an aid, another tool that is part of your marketing toolbox. Like any other single tool, it is best used in combination — as an integrated element — with the tools used in the balance of your campaigns.

Understanding the *contributory* impact of social media — the difference between reaching a million people who may or not be thinking about repainting the living room this weekend versus reaching the thousand who actually have this task on their "to do" list right now — is critical not only to getting the most out of the Social Web but also to successfully "selling in" your plan. Where a traditional campaign can be presented in terms of "millions reached," a social campaign is typically presented in terms of a "thousand influenced." It will fall to you to make the case for the smaller, highly targeted social efforts that effectively convey your brand by allowing potential customers a direct and participative role in shaping and sharing a collective message about your product or service. Your social campaign — the false notion of "going viral" aside — is best built on small pieces that connect current customers directly with potential customers. These small pieces serve to amplify, extend, or bring credibility to your larger awareness campaigns. Added up, these smaller social campaigns (in comparison to the millions of eyeballs purchased via traditional media) are a significantly forceful component in your overall marketing program. If you couldn't interrupt… these messages would still get through.

Audio and Video Podcasting

Quick: What's the difference between an audio or video clip and a podcast? The answer is "Nothing, unless you count how it's actually delivered and consumed," which of course on the Social Web turns out make all the difference. The real importance of podcasting isn't the clip itself but rather *how it is delivered*. To be clear, the content does matter. The content itself has to do something for someone — it has to make your audience smarter, or laugh, or illustrate a point, etc. Note, however, that

those are the same rules that apply to any marketing content that is expected to perform well, on the Social Web or anyplace else.

This point about delivery and consumption is again a fundamental indicator of the way in which the Social Web changes the rules of engagement for marketing, and again an example of the opportunity created for a savvy marketer. Start with a quick look at what makes a podcast a podcast. A podcast is after all, nothing more than a sequenced, subscription-based delivery container for content, generally audio or video. Podcasting is, at its core, an extension of blogging. And like blogging, podcasting is another application of RSS. Just like with a blog, your "readers" (here, listeners or viewers) subscribe to your podcast. Just like blogging, you publish regular posts, though in this case they are called "episodes." Finally, just like blogging, new episodes are automatically delivered to designated players — typically a computer, an iPod (from whence the name originates) or phone, or similar hand-held device. Once delivered, those who subscribe to your podcast can listen to or watch the episodes you've produced.

Podcasting: Numbers Don't Lie

If you've never listened to a podcast, you may be tempted to dismiss this medium as a fringe channel. It's not. Not only is it popular, it's also highly effective. Consider the following:

- Advertising in podcasts and online shows has a three-fold ad effectiveness increase over traditional online video and a seven-fold effectiveness increase over television. Unaided ad awareness across two years of studies was 68 percent compared to industry benchmarks of 21 percent for streaming video and 10 percent for television.

- Embedded ad placements are more effective than pre-roll across a range of audio and video formats, including varying spot lengths (:10, :15, :30 seconds) and across show formats (produced and host-read).

- Advertising in podcasts and online shows is effective in moving users from awareness to consideration to purchase. There is a 73 percent average increase in likelihood to use/buy versus a control group.

- Podcast advertising leads to a more favorable opinion of an advertiser after hearing or seeing an ad. Sixty-nine percent of those podcast listeners surveyed had a more favorable view of the advertisers following ad exposure.

Source: Podtrac-TNS Advertising Effectiveness Studies, 2006–2008.

With podcasting, beyond the content it's all about delivery. It's about giving your audience the absolute choice of where, when, and how to consume your content. Embedding a clip into a website fails on this count: it requires a visit to the website! If someone is on a mountain bike or hiking in Muir Woods, *they aren't going to simultaneously visit your website*. By allowing the people you want to reach to take your message to the place, time, and appropriate device of their choosing, you make your

message accessible on an entirely different level. It means giving someone the ability to listen to an executive thought-leadership series while walking on the beach. It means making riding the train, working out at the gym, sitting in the airport (not that you ever do *that*) productive. In short, it means giving valuable gifts to your audience: the gifts of time, place, and choice.

By giving control over to your audience and then empowering them to set the terms of engagement with your message it signals that you are on their side, that you are a partner, and that you fundamentally understand the pressures and challenges presented in a multitask-oriented, information-driven world. If it sounds like I've gone off the deep end here, stop. Put the book down and continue through the rest of your day, but keep what you've just read in the back of your mind. Count the number of times today that you say or think "OK, hold on, let me finish this and I'll get back to you." Count the number of times that two or more "priority" events compete for your attention. Podcasting — and specifically giving your audience the choice over where, when and which device — *empowers your audience to shift the point of consumption of your message to a place where full engagement can actually occur.* As a marketer, isn't that what you really want? A great example of podcasting used effectively in marketing is Susan Bratton's "Personal Life Media," shown in Figure 10.7.

Figure 10.7 Personal Life Media

Featured Case: Cancer InfoLink and ProstateNet Podcast Series

I first met Dr. Krongrad working with ProstateNet.org, an outreach program created by prostate cancer survivor Virgil Simmons to provide men with information about the treatment available and the importance of talking with their doctor. A podcasting firm that I co-founded, HearThis.com, created a podcast series for Virgil: that series is a part of the cancer awareness and outreach program developed by Virgil. I was interviewing Dr. Krongrad about *laproscopic* — meaning "surgery without cutting you open" — *radical prostatectomy* (removal of the prostate). Dr. Krongrad pioneered the use of laparoscopic radical prostatectomy after witnessing first hand the needless blood loss and painful complications of traditional, open prostatectomy. The Krongrad Institute is the world's only private program devoted exclusively to laparoscopic prostate surgery. (http://www.laprp.com/)

Six months after we had completed the interview and published the podcast, I got an email from Dr. Krongrad inviting me to review his newest project, the community extension of Cancer Info-Link (http://prostatecancerinfolink.ning.com/). Dr. Krongrad had used the Ning social platform to create a discussion community around the outreach and awareness work that he is doing in conjunction with the podcast series.

Based on the initiative of Virgil and Dr. Krongrad, simple tools like podcasting and the free Ning community platform have been put to use educating men and their families about the issues of prostate cancer. The podcast allows men — who typically suppress emotions like fear, hurt, and pain — to educate themselves in relative privacy. The community groups on Cancer InfoLink give survivors a forum where they can talk with each other about beating cancer and talk with men who are just now recognizing that they too need to take action in order to do the same. These are powerful examples of social media, and testament to just how accessible and impactful this form of communication has become.

Thursday's One-Hour Exercise

Today you're going to spend an hour listening to and watching selected podcasts, and then picking a few for subscription. In this sense, you'll be doing part of this exercise today — sampling — and part of the exercise later when you actually listen and view the subscriptions. To satisfy the "immediate gratification" needs of a contemporary audience, one of the podcasting "best practices" is providing your audience with a "sampling" option that satisfies this need for immediacy. You'll start the exercise in the same way that your audience will typically experience your podcast program: by reviewing the descriptions of the podcast, and then continue by clicking the Listen Now button or link. Once you've found something that you like, subscribe to it. If you have a mobile device that can accept podcasts, set up your subscription to push the episodes to that device.

> ### No Podcast-Capable Device?
>
> If you don't have a mobile audio device, now would be a good time to get one. According to Podtrac, about 60 percent of all podcasts are listened to on a portable device, compared with 40 percent on a PC. The Apple iPod is by far the easiest to use. Shop around and look for a model that suits you. If you're on a budget, look for deals on "last year's model." Do you have an iPod savvy daughter? Offer to buy her a new one in exchange for her old one and a quick tutorial. Getting a decent podcast-capable device empowers you to take the content with you. This in turn allows you to explore the places where content consumption makes sense for you — and in so doing discover or imagine the places that your audience may choose to do the same. Try it. It's a great exercise, and one that is likely to change your view of your mobile device and of the potential venues for marketing content delivered via podcasting.

Here is a starting set of podcasts that you can sample. Some are personal interest, others are pure business. Note how each is monetized, and how each can be used to carry a persuasive message. With some, the content is the vehicle that carries a relatively traditional advertising play, they use pre- or post-roll ads, or video overlays. In others — like the series on men's health from ProstateNet.org — the message itself is the focus: the "marketing" objective is to bring information to men and persuade them to pay attention to their own health.

Already listening to or watching podcasts? If you're already a podcast consumer, then you can either do the exercise above — hey, you may find something new that you enjoy — or you can follow along, using your own podcasts in place of those above.

As you work through the exercise, note the following:

- The role of the description: how well were you able to judge the likely relevance of the content *before* you listened to it.

- The role of the "listen now" feature: did this help you make your decision?

- The presence or absence of "send to a friend."

- The presence or absence of a subscription option. Remember, if you can't subscribe, it's not a podcast. (It may still be great content, but it's not a podcast.)

- The overall quality of the podcast — how does it compare with other podcasts? With TV? What difference — if any — did this make? How good is "good enough?"

- What is the most important aspect of the podcast? For example, is it quality? Content? Accessibility?

  Personal Life Media/ Living Green
  http://blogs.personallifemedia.com/living-green/

  IBM Thought Leadership
  http://www-01.ibm.com/webcasts/podcasts

  Shell Global Solutions
  http://www.shell.com/globalsolutions/podcasts

  Slate Podcasts
  http://www.slate.com/id/2119317/

  Ted Talks
  http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks

Thursday's Wrap-Up

Today you explored podcasts and, hopefully, found and subscribed to a couple of them. More importantly, you gained a first-hand experience with a medium that is purpose-built for time and place shifting, in other words, the ability to take your content wherever you go and enjoy when it makes sense for you. If you're new to RSS subscriptions, as the podcasts you've signed up for begin arriving you'll get a real sense for the empowerment that choice over "where, where, and what" provides. If you're already subscribed to podcasts (and are consuming them on a mobile device) you've already experienced this.

By providing content in a portable format, you effectively increase not only the productivity of your audience (especially so with audio, which is built for multi-tasking), but you increase the likelihood that your content will be listened to in an environment with lower background noise (in both the physical and mental sense). That can be a significant factor in engagement, retention, and message reception. As a bonus, because the content can be easily shared, you've set your audience up to refer what they find useful among themselves, further adding to the effectiveness of your overall marketing program.

Your Social Media Marketing Plan

This week you covered social content — media created by you and your customers for the specific purpose of sharing uses, insights, and experiences among those interested in what you do. Applications include learning more, understanding purchase or use-related nuances, having fun, and a lot more.

Pulling Things Together

Now it's time to put this to work, and that means adding these elements to your developing social media marketing plan. As you work through today's exercise and the continued development of your plan, keep in mind that none of this social content exists alone: In Figure 10.8, look at the range of content — a blog, Twitter presence, video, photos, and event calendars — that powers the comprehensive online presence for the Brooklyn Museum.

Friday's One-Hour Exercise

To start off today's exercise, gather together the notes you made this week about video, photos, and podcasting. Review them, and then think through the following thought starters:

- What are the most challenging aspects of your current marketing program, in terms of overcoming objections, of driving new uses, or driving additional purchases?

- Which of the above lend themselves to assistance via video, photos, or a podcast?

- Which of these lend themselves to the kinds of content that your customers would create? Which would be best if *you* made the content, and then gave it your existing customers to share or comment on?

- What are the most promising multimedia applications that would add depth to the blog you created in the prior chapter?

Friday's Wrap-Up

You've now got a solid start on a comprehensive marketing plan that includes an effective component. To say it again, your social components are intended to complement — not replace — traditional media, direct mail, online media, and other marketing elements that you are using. Last week you stepped into networks. You saw how to create an effective marketing presence within social networks. You also got a look at the white-label tools that are available to quickly add an "owned" experience to your interactive programs.

As an example of how all of the channels you've seen come together to create a solid social campaign, go beyond Figure 10.8 and check out — online — the work of the Brooklyn Museum The Brooklyn Museum combines a website, blog, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr (along with an excellent photography policy!), and more to support its overall online presence and to connect the online audience to the museum itself.
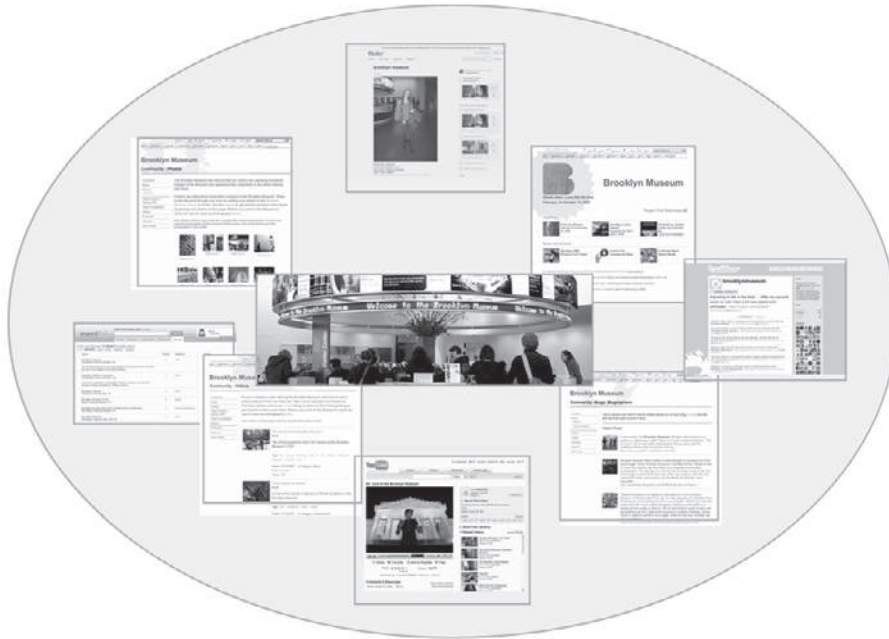

Figure 10.8 Brooklyn Museum: Comprehensive Social Media Involvement

Featured Case: Brooklyn Museum of Art

The Brooklyn Museum of Art has created an outstanding social presence for itself through the smart use of social media. Building off of the main website, which includes a blog, directory, and similar information resources, the museum's media team has added a presence on Twitter that is used to disseminate short bits of information. YouTube and Flickr are used as well: YouTube has videos of museum exhibits and promotions, and Flickr is filled with images taken by visitors and uploaded to the museum's Flickr group. Eventful, a social media-based calendar tool, lists all of the events coming up, along with a running commentary by people who have visited in the past. All in all, it adds to a solid presence, and one with multiple connection points. The museum's overall social presence is shown in Figure 10.8.

Chapter 10: The Main Points

- Blogs are an effective, easy way to build a credible social presence: Be prepared to deal with direct, public customer feedback.

- Microblogs are casual forums that can be used to quickly create a following.

- Audio and video content can be used to extend text-based information. When created by your customers, video can convey to them a real sense of participation in the brand.

- Podcasting gives those interested in what you have to say the ability to choose where, when, and on what device they will listen.

- Social media is one of the many tools that you have available when developing and extending your business presence. Like your entire toolbox, the more that your social components interlock with each other and with your traditional efforts, the better.