

What Is Social Media?

Social media involves a natural, genuine conversation between people about something of mutual interest, a conversation built on the thoughts and experiences of the participants. It is about sharing and arriving at a collective point, often for the purpose of making a better or more-informed choice. Beginning with this simple focused concept, this chapter will explore social media in more detail. First, I'll define it more precisely (and demonstrate something about social media in the process) and then move into how you can use social media to complement the marketing activities you are using in your current campaigns.

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Social Media Defined

Think back to school: When you wanted to know what something was, you went to the dictionary for words and the encyclopedia for most everything else. So where do you look for a “current” definition of social media? How about the reference that is itself built on the principles of social media. That is, of course, Wikipedia. This socially built online encyclopedia is an example of both “social media” and the social processes that make this emerging form of media so powerful. You may be thinking, “Hey wait! Who says Wikipedia is accurate? I’ve heard that people can write anything, whatever they want!” That much is true: in Wikipedia you can write whatever you want. However, it’s also true that just as soon as you do — often within a few minutes — someone else will look at what you just wrote and either validate it or revert the passage to its prior state.



Fact: Wikipedia and the Encyclopedia Britannica both have errors. In a study conducted by the scientific journal *Nature*, Wikipedia was found to have 162 errors across 50 articles, compared with 123 for Britannica. Wikipedia tends to get corrected quickly, as does the online version of Britannica, so these online versions actually fare better over time than their print counterparts. A better way to view Wikipedia — and in fact, any encyclopedia — is to imagine a group of interested participants, fastidiously reviewing the content entries and guiding a discussion, arriving at an agreed-on result. More often than not, and true to the promise of social media and the tapping of the collective, the resulting Wikipedia entry is dead on. In June of 2008, Britannica Online announced its new program that recognizes the potential in a collaborative approach to the development of its content. You can read more about this at the Britannica blog (<http://britannicanet.com/?p=88>).

The Wikipedia process for arriving at a definition of “social media” is an excellent example *of* social media: social media is used in this context to tap the collective expertise and arrive at an acceptable conclusion. It is the wisdom of the crowd, with all caveats fully present. Think about this a bit if you’re still skeptical: it’s actually a rather insightful look into social media. The Wikipedia process provides a great example of why social media is useful to you as a marketer.

When I first started writing this book, Wikipedia did not have an agreed-to definition of social media. Instead, Wikipedia had an emerging, in-process definition of what more accurately described activities on the “Social Web” — the total of all of the applications and uses of online tools aimed at enabling consumer-generated and shared content, and facilitating conversations relating to that content between people. This short definition was *followed by an intense discussion of what social media might or*

might not be. This discussion, which began late in 2006, only recently stabilized with a fairly solid definition.

Social Media, Defined the Wiki Way

Beyond Wikipedia's definition of social media, the process by which it was developed is worth noting. Take a minute and review the Wikipedia discussion around the development of the definition of social media. You'll find this by going to Wikipedia and then searching for "social media." Once there, click on the Discussion tab and see how the current definition came about.

Here is how Wikipedia defined "social media" on Friday, January 12, 2008:

***Social Media:** Participatory online media where news, photos, videos, and podcasts are made public via social media websites through submission. Normally accompanied with a voting process to make media items become "popular."*

***Social Media Expanded Definition:** Social media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers. Social media uses the "wisdom of crowds" to connect information in a collaborative manner. Social media can take many different forms, including Internet forums, message boards, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video. Technologies such as blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, group creation and voice over IP, to name a few. Examples of social media applications are Google (reference, social networking), Wikipedia (reference), MySpace (social networking), Facebook (social networking), Last.fm (personal music), YouTube (social networking and video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), and Flickr (photo sharing).*

How Does Social Media Differ from Traditional Media?

Social media has a number of characteristics that make it fundamentally different from traditional media such as newspapers, television, books, and radio. Note that this does not mean "use instead of" but rather implies a different set of tools that can be used to complement what you are doing now. Again from Wikipedia: "The audience can participate in social media by adding comments or even editing the stories themselves."

From the Wikipedia entry come these fundamental elements that merit notice.

1. Social media involves a number of different *social* channels and especially online social channels, just as traditional media utilizes a number of different channels.
2. Social media changes over time. The Wikipedia entry will continue to evolve as our collective understanding and acceptance of just what constitutes “social media” evolves.
3. Social media is participative: the “audience” is assumed to be part of the creative process or force that generates content.

Herein are found the most important aspects of social media from a marketer’s perspective: social media isn’t a “thing” in the sense that direct mail or TV advertising are, but is rather a *collaborative process* through which information is created, shared, altered, and destroyed.

Featured Case: Fiskars

Fiskars Brands needed to build an emotional connection with their customers. They engaged Brains on Fire for the development of an online and offline brand ambassador movement. They were able to not only increase emotional connections, but increase online chatter about their brand 600 percent, bring new voices into the blogosphere, and grow sales rates in key regions by 300 percent.

Is Social Media Accurate?

This may seem the question of the day but it’s really a red herring. Consider that the same line of thinking that results in the dismissal — rather than attempted understanding — of Wikipedia because “anyone can contribute” can do the same for the collective message in a social conversation. After all, all of this is really nothing more than “a few comments from the people on the Internet” right? Don’t make that mistake. This is not to say “believe everything you read...” but rather that if you build a solid process around *listening* via the Social Web — in good part what this book is about — then you can learn a lot about your products and services *directly from your customers*. This is knowledge that you can put to good use as a marketer, in applications ranging from product development and evolution to practical applications like increasing average sales in your online checkout process or reducing expenses by lowering return rates.



Tip: When your customer base rejects your product or service, you really do have to fix it if you want to succeed as a marketer on the Social Web.

- To get the most out of this book, following these ground rules will be helpful:
1. Social media uses the collective, the wisdom of the crowd; it is seldom *entirely* wrong. In fact, more often than not, it is more than reasonably accurate and therefore constitutes a measurable, trackable feedback point with regard to the acceptance and performance of your product or service.
 2. Social media is used effectively through participation and influence, not command and control. In each of the upcoming chapters, I will highlight the opportunities for participation and show how your participation can lead to influence, influence that helps you achieve your business and marketing objectives.

As you think through all of this — your mind jumping to things like inaccurate perceptions, uncontrolled forums, loss of control over your brand or message — it can appear pointless and intimidating, even a bit scary. The response is often “OK, fine, we’re not going to use these channels. Our brand isn’t ready to engage customers on this level. We don’t want to appear to be endorsing these conversations.” Here’s the problem: social media exists, and social media is real. It gets used by people who are thinking about buying your product *because* it was created by people who have already purchased your product. Social media is utilized in the conversations that occur between your customers — conversations that you may not even know about and certainly will not be part of unless you are present and listening. Choosing not to participate is tantamount to *endorsing* — by your own absence — the messages that are ultimately formed in social channels. You can choose whether or not your customers will see you on TV. You cannot choose whether or not your customers will see you on the Social Web. They will, because *they will put you there*. You can only choose whether or not you will *join* them there. As such, for contemporary brands aiming for long-term success, not participating is not an option.

Featured Case: Home Depot

What happens when you choose to participate? Consider Home Depot and the Social Web. If you search blogs, YouTube, Flickr, and similar sites for entries relating to Home Depot, you’ll find plenty of negative content. Home Depot has its followers and detractors through no fault of its own: It’s basically impossible for a business the size of Home Depot, and in particular a “big box” retailer for someone, somewhere, not to say something negative. The Social Web makes this even easier, and so there is negative content about Home Depot in circulation, and there is little if anything that Home Depot can do about this negative content. Instead, Home Depot participates on the Social Web itself: it provide how-to videos and allows the use of cameras (or at least looks the other way) when parents want to take pictures of their kids building a bird feeder or wooden fire truck at one of Home Depot’s “Kids Workshops.” Those same people can then upload and share their pictures from Home Depot on sites such as Flickr, shown in Figure 3.1.

continues

Featured Case: Home Depot (Continued)

These workshops are offered the first Saturday of each month, and they are free. You'll find plenty of pictures documenting various projects online, created and uploaded by kids and parents right along with success stories based on the use of Home Depot products in renovation and remodeling projects. By participating on the Social Web in this way, Home Depot ensures that there is plenty of "positive content" to counter the "negative" and thereby brings a balance to the content on the Social Web. The result is a more balanced reflection that includes the positive contribution Home Depot makes within its local communities.

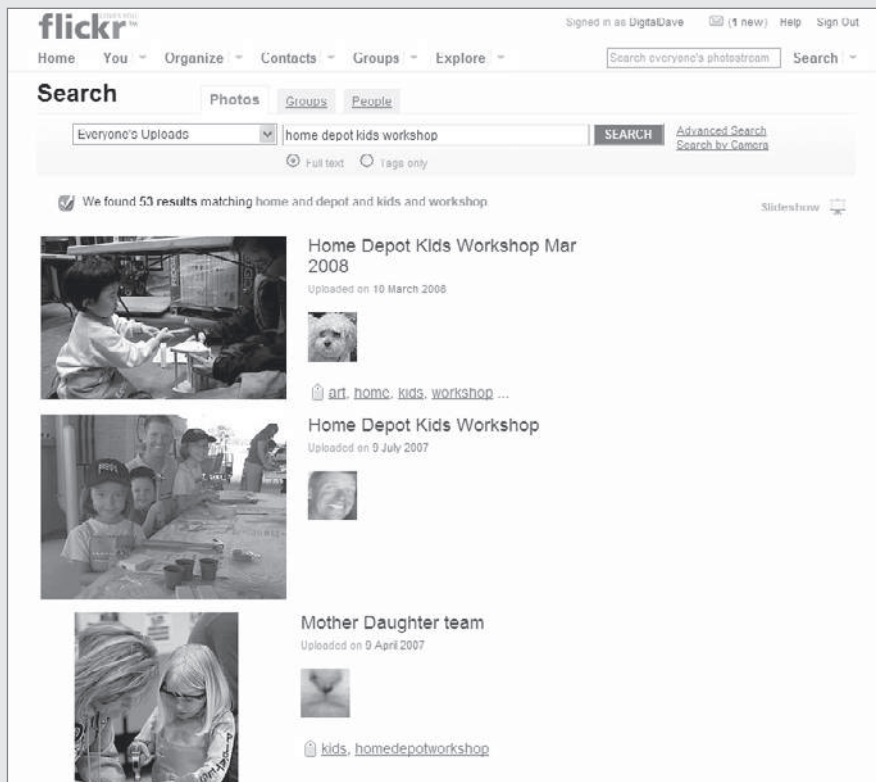


Figure 3.1 Home Depot Kids Workshops

Social Media and Marketing

From a marketer's perspective, the premises I've asserted with regard to the application of social media in marketing are daunting. Assume that what the crowd says is valid, and that you have limited control over what they say. Scary as this may seem, if you learn how to "influence the crowd" effectively you can actually create a significant and

defensible market position based on solid social acceptance. The Social Web, used correctly, is all about what your community of supporters can do to help you build your business. Keep in mind too that all of your other channels still exist; social media is a complementary extension of all of your other marketing efforts. Social media is, after all, more of a mind-set than a true channel; however, throughout this book I will show you practical ways through which you can approach social media as if it were a marketing channel.

So how do you influence a crowd? Well, given that you can't tell "it" what to think, going the *direct control* route is probably a loser. Instead, *listen* to it. Tap it. Learn from it. And then "do that." One of the characteristics of social media is that you can listen to it, measure it, and track it over time. You can use what you learn to modify and improve *what you offer*, and in so doing influence the online conversation.

Take a look back at the primary elements of the Wikipedia definition:

Social Media: Participatory online media where news, photos, videos, and podcasts are made public via social media websites through submission. *Normally accompanied with a voting process to make media items become "popular."*



Social media is characterized largely if not completely by the content trail — ratings, reviews, comments, and more — that it leaves on the Social Web, and by the voting processes and related assessments that clearly mark what the crowd thinks of this content. So, right off, you've got a measurable "pulse" that you can use to guide your efforts in near real-time. Listening to and responding to your customers by paying attention to their conversations is a great way to use social media to "influence" these discussions. But just how do you *influence* them? This question brings us to the heart of what social media is, and how to use it properly as a marketer.

Featured Case: Hallmark Idea Exchange and Project HaHa!

Hallmark has always been a company to watch in the greeting card and retail gift industry — and they were one of the first companies to work with an online customer community. They have been true pioneers in the consumer space. In 2000, the Hallmark/Communispace team launched the "Hallmark Idea Exchange," where 200 mothers with young children were recruited to brainstorm ideas, help Hallmark rethink the retail experience and merchandise, and react to pricing. They effectively became an extension of the marketing team as close advisors on just about everything Hallmark was working on — including how to get a handle on what's funny to baby boomers (turning 40 is not the same for boomers as for their parents). In 2004, Hallmark introduced "Project HaHa!" to better understand how people's sense of humor was changing — and how to retune its Classic Humor and Shoebox card lines.

At the start of this chapter, I established a basic concept: that social media is based on a natural, genuine conversation between people about something of mutual interest. Because social media gains its power from sharing and consensus, if you influence it by any means other than transparent, genuine participation, you taint the outcome. The results are effectively meaningless.

Instead of trickery, coercion, or control, when I talk about “influencing the crowd” I am talking about giving them an experience that they will want to talk about, positively, and then using the resulting conversation to continuously improve. If you follow this approach, over time you will separate yourself from competitors who don’t tap social media, and especially from those who opt for shortcuts.



Tip: As a marketer, you *do not* want to control your audience. If that is your only recourse, you are better off not using social media at all.

Social Media as a Guidepost

One of the most valuable aspects of social media from a marketer’s perspective is in building and maintaining a feedback loop. It is through this feedback loop — and your measurement of it — that you can learn *where and how* to influence the social conversations that are important to you. Firms like Cymfony, Intelliseek, and BuzzMetrics built practices around this application of social media, focusing on blogs and similar text-based conversations. Of course, getting the data is only part of the equation: doing something with it is where the real action is. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the elements of social media, and how they play into the purchase process via the social feedback cycle — simply, the feeding back of the post-purchase experiences of *current* customers into the purchase funnel at the point of consideration for use by *potential* customers when making a purchase decision. Later chapters cover in detail the actual use of social media and the metrics that are available to you for measuring and managing your social campaigns.

What If You Don’t Run in Nikes?

One of the more interesting pieces of user-generated content that I’ve seen is the “How To” on converting any brand of running shoe into a “Nike Plus” compatible shoe. The content — which includes instructions, photos (Flickr), and video (YouTube) — provides the step-by-step process to cut away a section of the inner sole of the shoe and install the Apple transponder that tracks and stores details of your last run for upload when you’re back home. Whether these modified shoes really work or not, here is a group of runners who found the *idea* of this type of running

What If You Don't Run in Nikes? (Continued)

community, created by Nike and Apple, so compelling that they actually carved up their shoes so that they could participate. That's the kind of participation that social media encourages, and the kind of content that drives the Social Web. You're probably wondering "What's Nike's role in all of this?" Actually, *nothing*, which again points to Nike's understanding of the medium. A lot of firms would have a legal team all over this, demanding that this content be removed and these contributors be stopped. Instead, Nike remains mum — neither endorsing nor condemning. People will do all sorts of things on the Social Web: as a savvy social marketer, part of your challenge is knowing when to get involved and when to simply stay out of the way.

To get an idea of how the social feedback loop that you'll create, tap, and measure is set up, look at the classic purchase funnel shown in Figure 3.2 from the traditional media perspective. The three stages — awareness, consideration, and purchase — define a pathway along which you move potential customers toward the ultimate goal, the sale.

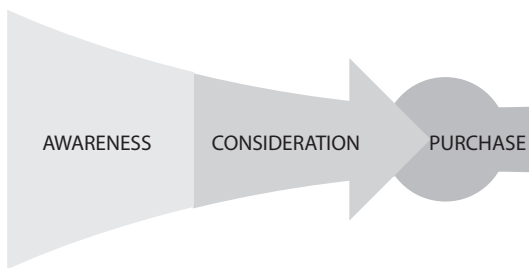


Figure 3.2 The Classic Purchase Funnel

The purchase funnel offers both an insight into why traditional media works so well, and why marketers who rely on traditional media exclusively have difficulties when first thinking through the potential application of social media. The purchase funnel is a model that characterizes the process that leads from awareness through consideration to purchase *as if it existed in a vacuum*. It treats your marketing program — and in fact your entire business — as if it were a closed system. If it ever was — debatable in itself — it isn't anymore. A more contemporary representation of the purchase funnel incorporates the Social Web and accounts for the impact of consumer-generated media during the consideration stage. It is an open model that recycles the experiential data generated by current customers for the benefit of the next wave of shoppers. The feedback loop that connects the post-purchase conversation back to the purchase funnel is the key to the application of social media. This is the subject of the next section.

Social Media's Impact on the Purchase Funnel

Traditional media is a time-tested workhorse when it comes to awareness. Marketers can literally “buy” market share through awareness-focused media. To this day, spending on traditional advertising is often expressed as “dollars per point,” meaning not only that a certain spend level buys a certain exposure (e.g., ratings points) but also that “X dollars” spent will or did generate “Y market share points” in the business sense of market share. To be sure, someone who sees your ad — the “ad spend” part of the equation — has to actually buy the product in order to realize those market share points. But for many industries, there is an accepted sense of cause and effect between advertising spend and market share. Think especially about Hollywood and the movie business where a relatively robust formulaic approach often predicts the opening weekend gross based on up-front ad spending. It’s not surprising that Hollywood is likely already feeling the direct impact — both positively and negatively — of social media. Two insightful film-opening events suggest that this is in fact the case. The first, *Gigli* — pronounced “ZJEE-lee” and released a few years ago — was one of the those “should have been a bigger open” that simply wasn’t. Even though ad spend was significant, the opening weekend was a disappointment. *Gigli* wasn’t the first movie — and certainly won’t be the last — to perform poorly at the box office. What is notable about this case is that the box-office performance fizzled on Friday night, *between the early and late screenings*. Typically, if a film bombs — or soars, for that matter — it does so *after* the opening weekend, not *during* the opening weekend. People need time to gather (for example, in the office on Monday) or to go home and write online reviews after seeing the film during the opening weekend. In the case of *Gigli*, the culprit was “texting” (SMS). During the early shows, influential viewers were letting their late-show friends know that they could safely skip this film. They did.

Social media, like any other form of expression that takes its roots in word of mouth, cuts both ways. It can boost viewership and purchase by reinforcing the underlying marketing message just as easily as it weakens intent and the likelihood of successful conversion. Early films that demonstrated the beneficial impact of social media — spurring more recent use of the channels — include *Superbad* and *Resident Evil: Extinction*. Think back to when these were released: they were the first films released by Sony/Columbia Tristar where spending levels for online marketing — including through social media — edged out traditional forms of advertising as the primary spends associated with driving *awareness*. Both went on to box-office success: *Superbad* grossed in excess of \$160 million while *Resident Evil* pulled in more than \$100 million. Dwight Caines, Columbia Tristar EVP, Worldwide Digital Marketing, had this to say at the time: “The tools for people to use social networking and collaborative site building are now commonplace. As a marketer, you have to find new ways to stay on top of those trends.”

Social media sits at the pinnacle of the current trends in consumer-to-consumer conversation and marketing effort amplification. The takeaway here for marketers across all categories is that in the examples presented here, the marketing teams “gambled” on social and digital media as the primary awareness tool, and turned down the spend on traditional media channels. The results speak for themselves. As you set up your social media program, don’t hesitate to experiment. Don’t be reckless, either: your brand may or may not be your life, but it’s almost certainly your livelihood. Begin with your business objectives and solid preparation and a current review of your customer’s online media habits using the tools and techniques presented in Chapter 5, “The Social Feedback Cycle,” Chapter 6, “Touchpoint Analysis,” and Chapter 7, “Influence and Measurement.” Then, look at the various social media channels you have available: These will be presented in a systematic way beginning in Chapter 8, “Build a Social Media Campaign.” Find the channels that build on or complement your current efforts or that fill a gap in your current marketing program and start there, building your social media program as you develop your capabilities.

The Social Feedback Cycle

In most organizations, a set of disciplines and capabilities that roll up under “operations” and ultimately report to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) or an equivalent are the point within that organization where the rubber meets the road — where the customer experiences that drive word of mouth and (now) social media actually happen. It may be a product use or store experience, an interaction with a field service professional, or a call to customer support. In general, these are all operations-based experiences. By contrast, marketing is charged with telling potential customers what these experiences are likely to be and why they matter, or reinforcing in current customers why making this same choice again is a good idea.

Tip: Marketing promises. Operations delivers .



The connection between operations and marketing — between promise and delivery — is central to social media. Social media — in the business context — is based on the degree to which the actual experience matches the expectation set. If you’re wondering about the importance of social media, consider this: Recent studies have shown that of the estimated 3.5 *billion* word-of-mouth conversations that occur around the world *each day*, about 2.3 billion of them — roughly two out of three — make a reference to a brand, product, or service. Word of mouth is increasingly manifesting itself through digital social media, where it spreads both farther and faster. This use of the Social Web is increasingly important to marketers.

Many of the difficulties faced by contemporary CMOs are in fact issues that arise not in Marketing, but in Operations. Home Depot lost CMO Roger Adams after seeing more than its share of prior CMO departures in the recent past. In an *Advertising Age* article, Home Depot’s need for operational efficiency was cited. *Advertising Age* noted that Home Depot’s needs are (in order): “a better floor experience, better trained associates, and more traffic.” The majority of the CMOs, CEOs, and COOs would be tempted to separate these, assigning floor experience and associate training to operations while hammering the CMO for traffic. In fact, these are all Operations issues that impact Marketing — people talk about each of these in conversations with friends and neighbors about experiences that originate in *Operations*. Beyond the first visit that any specific individual makes to Home Depot (and c’mon...who hasn’t already been to at least one Home Depot?), the floor experience combined with the perceived level of associate competence *directly drives floor traffic*. It is not uncommon to see a customer asking for an associate in Home Depot *by name*, very likely the result of a prior, positive experience. Compared to providing a great experience with a knowledgeable associate, a flyer advertising a few cents off on Duracell batteries is a weak proposition for boosting sales, especially when what Home Depot sells — things to make your home or residence better — are things which are very likely to start conversations: “You have to come over for dinner next Saturday to see what we did to the patio this weekend!” That is the kind of conversation that will drive floor traffic at Home Depot.

Look back at the purchase funnel, and expand it to include “post-purchase” experiences of the overall marketing process as shown in Figure 3.3. Social media connects these experiences back to the purchase process in the social feedback cycle. Social media is effectively the product of Operations, given the expectation (the brand or promise) established in Marketing.

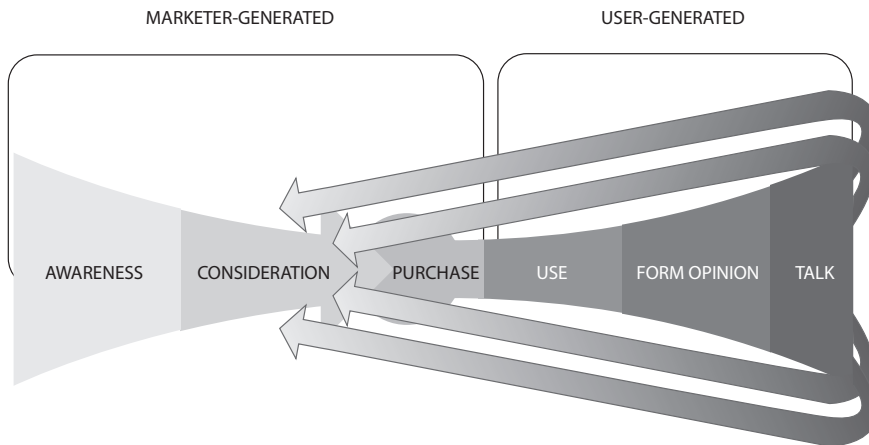


Figure 3.3 The Social Feedback Cycle

The “consideration phase” of the purchase cycle is an area that marketers have typically avoided, primarily because it hasn’t been — and still isn’t — *directly* accessible. Instead they spend heavily on awareness and on point-of-purchase efforts — as an example, think of point-of-sale coupons or keyword campaigns — and then hope, generally correctly, that the consideration “gap” takes care of itself as consumers, charged up with awareness-inspired demand, head for the checkout lanes. Looking at the purchase funnel this way, it all makes sense: generate awareness and then supplement that at or near the cash register with point-of-sale marketing efforts as needed. A decent product — or at the least one with a clear promise — ought to be able to jump through the “consideration” phase.

In 2004, Dave Ellett, Jeff Petry (CEO and Sr. Director of Marketing, respectively, of the social media firm Powered), and I “extended” the purchase funnel conceptually to include the impact of post-purchase consumer activities. At that point, post-purchase was largely the domain of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and services. In many firms CRM was separated from Marketing, often seen as an Operations extension where it was all too often used to measure performance alone rather than the combination of performance and *delivered experience*. Word-of-mouth, especially the online variety that in part gives rise to social media, makes obvious the relationship that has long existed — more or less invisibly — between promise and delivery. The social feedback cycle is set in motion by a post-purchase opinion that forms based on the relationship between the expectations set and the actual performance of the product or service. This opinion drives word-of-mouth, and word-of-mouth ultimately feeds back into the purchase funnel *in the consideration phase*.

Wham!

Right between awareness and point-of-purchase comes customer-driven social media. It hits hard too: remember, word-of-mouth is considered to be the most trusted source of information, a fact again affirmed in a recent (2007) Zenith Optimedia study. If the experience is less than expected, your awareness efforts get short-circuited beyond the initial purchase wave. Think back to the mother of all film-industry “word of mouth” success stories, *The Blair Witch Project*. The social feedback cycle boosted uptake and created nothing short of a phenomenon. Social media does indeed cut both ways: Be sure you know which way the scissors are pointing before you start cutting.

Tip: The social feedback cycle is driven by word-of-mouth, itself driven by the actual post-purchase or trial/sampling experience. It is essential that Operations and Marketing be in sync.



You’ll spend more time on the relationship between Operations and Marketing along with the social feedback cycle and the effective use of social media later in the book. For now, just keep in mind that they are related. It is through this relationship that you — as a marketer — influence the crowd. Getting the Operations + Marketing link right is the first step in successfully implementing social media.

The Elements of Social Media

So far, I've defined social media, and shown how it relates to the purchase funnel through the social feedback cycle. I've talked about the use of social media as a trend indicator, and how you can combine the efforts of Operations and Marketing to manage the behavior of crowds. The final section of this chapter covers specific social media channels.



Note: Throughout the book, I will refer to social media *channels*. What is meant by the term “channel” may be different from what you are used to, especially if you are thinking along the lines of something you can “buy” or schedule. Social media channels — e.g., blogging or photo sharing — as used throughout this book mean simply, “one of the methods or media forms through which social media is made available to Social Web participants.”

Robert Scoble, a noted blogger and technology evangelist, introduced what he calls the Starfish model of social media. Robert lists a dozen social media channels, organized around *conversion*, that are themselves examples and embodiments of online social technology. The channels Robert lists, shown in Figure 3.4 in the context of traditional media and the other channels you are likely using now, are:

- Blogs
- Photo sharing
- Video sharing
- Personal social networks
- Events (face to face) and event services
- Email
- White label social networks
- Wikis
- Podcasting (audio)
- Microblogs
- SMS (texting)
- Collaborative tools

Two essential marketing elements arise out of Robert's starfish concept: First, social media involves a diverse set of activities — photo sharing, blogging, and so on. Second, the effective use of social media depends in part on the activities selected and the mix of the social and traditional channels that your audience is interested in or to which it is receptive. In other words, the effective use of social media — technology, control, and a few details aside — is essentially an *integration* problem. Guess what?

You already know how to handle that. As a marketer, you've been managing integrated campaigns for years. Social media, while certainly different in terms of how you approach it, is no different than anything else in your marketing toolbox: the channels may be different, but you still plan for it within the context of your business and campaign objectives and audience and channel mix.

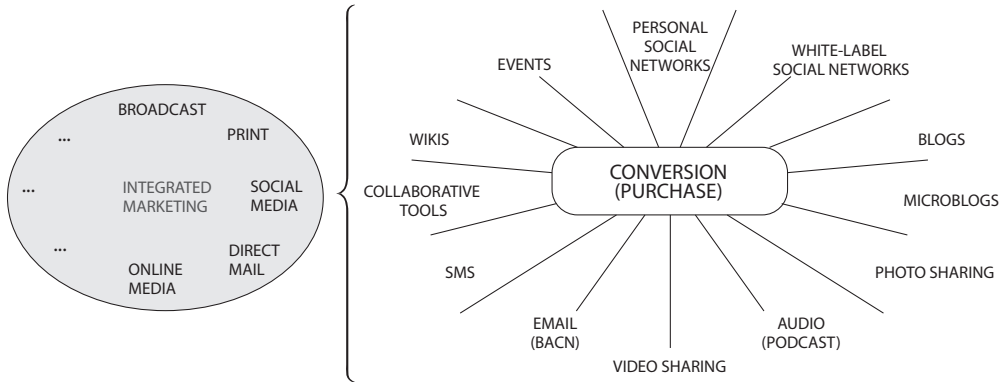


Figure 3.4 The Social Media Starfish

I will focus more on the various social media channels and the integration of social media into the larger set of channels available to you in Chapter 6, “Touchpoint Analysis.” I’ll dig into the networks themselves — including networks that you can build and implement — in Chapter 9, “Social Platforms.” Chapter 10, “Social Content: Multimedia,” Chapter 11, “Social Content: Reviews, Ratings, and Recommendations,” and Chapter 12, “Social Interactions,” will focus on content creation, ranging from text and multimedia to mobile services and events. I’ll work through how these different social media channels can be linked with each other, and with the balance of what you’re currently using from your overall marketing toolbox.

In the upcoming sections, you’ll start building your social media program. Following the Hour a Day format, you’ll do a little bit, each day, over a period of time. I believe that following this methodology will result in a success for you. Because you are only doing a small amount of work at any one time, you can learn as you go and combine what I present with the new innovations that will no doubt arise. Each chapter and each exercise builds on what came before it.

The challenges you will face will be along the lines of one or more of the following:

- Ceding control — real control — to your customers
- Building bridges into Operations
- Managing short-term performance expectations
- Getting a handle on technology in flux
- Allocating a budget for metrics and following through

The challenges you are most likely to face include the challenge of moving outside your comfort zone. My advice is to make your plan and then just do it. Follow the Hour a Day process, and stop and breathe when needed.

Think through the various examples you'll encounter in the upcoming chapters. Relate them to your business, and involve your coworkers. Build consensus. Above all, look at what you are selling or promoting. If it needs "fixing," then right now would be an excellent time to take care of that. When you hit Chapter 7, "Influence and Measurement," which discusses the Net Promoter Score and similar measures of acceptance, the response to your social efforts will be brutal if your product or service isn't all it's cracked up to be. If things are as they should be, you're going to find smooth sailing. Implemented correctly, social media will help set significant hurdles between you and your competition. If your product or service *isn't* all it should be — if there is a notable gap between marketing expectation and operational performance — and you don't take the time now to address that ... you've been warned.

Chapter 3: The Main Points

- Social media is defined as: Participatory online media where news, photos, videos, and podcasts are made public typically accompanied with a voting process to signal items considered "popular."
- Social media is an effective guidepost. Social media can be used to gather valuable information about how your product, service, and brand are perceived in the marketplace.
- The basic application of social media is as a consideration phase tool that connects post-purchase experiences with potential customers progressing from awareness to purchase.
- Social media is an activity that is based on the notion of *influence*.
- Planning and implementing channels associated with social media fits well with the concepts of integrated marketing.