Chapter 1

Understanding Social Influence Marketing

In This Chapter

▶ Understanding social media's role in social influence

▶ Knowing what types of influencers you're marketing to

▶ Coordinating your efforts with other types of marketing

▶ Moving beyond corporate marketing

*W*hen designing Web sites, you display banners and push your Web site listings higher up in the search engine rankings to promote and sell products. It's easy to forget how people actually buy. It's easy to assume that the potential customers are lonely people crouched over their computers late at night choosing what products to add to a shopping cart — isolated from the real world and their family and friends.

But in reality, that's not how people purchase online today. It might have been the case in the early days of the Web, when the people spending time online were the early adopters and the mavericks, the ones willing to take the risk of putting their credit card numbers into a computer hoping for accurate charges and secure transactions. In those days, few people bought online, and the ones who did were on the fringes of mainstream society.

Those days are over now. With nearly 260 million people using the Web on a regular basis in the United States alone, using the Internet has become a mainstream social activity. Consumers approach purchasing online differently, too, and as a result, you need to approach your marketing online differently as well. Your approach must incorporate influence marketing.

This chapter discusses the fundamentals of social influence marketing: what it is, how it works, and what it means in the context of your other marketing efforts.

Defining Social Influence Marketing

A discussion of any subject needs to begin with a definition, and so here's the one for social influence marketing: *Social influence marketing* is a technique that employs *social media* (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and *social influencers* (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs.

The definition warrants further explanation. Social media (which was probably one of the most hyped buzzwords in 2008) refers to content created and consumed by regular people for each other. It includes the comments a person adds at the end of an article on a Web site, the family photographs he uploads to a photo-sharing site, the conversations he has with friends in a social network, and the blog posts that he publishes or comments on. That's social media, and it's making everyone in the world a content publisher and arbitrator. It's democratizing the Web. WordPress.com, shown in Figure 1-1, is one popular blogging platform.

Figure 1-1: WordPress.com — just one example of many blog and social media platforms.
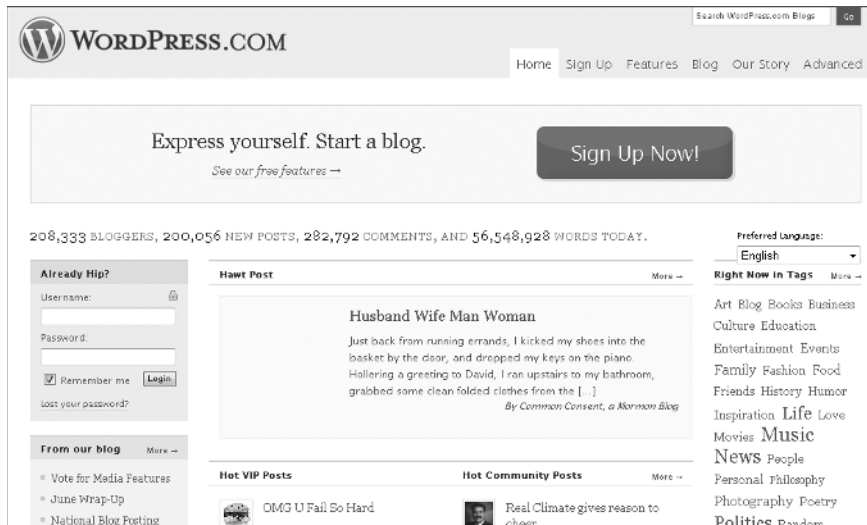
And then there are the social influencers. Are these people with special powers to influence a large majority of people? Not at all; rather, social influencers are the everyday people who influence the consumer as he makes a purchasing decision. Depending on the decision he's making, the social influencers may be a wife (or husband), friends, peers at work, or even someone the consumer has never even met in real life. Simply, the people who influence a brand affinity

and purchasing decision are the social influencers. They may do this directly by rating products and commenting or by publishing opinions and participating in conversations across the Web. Anyone can be a social influencer, influencing someone else's brand affinity and purchasing decisions, and you, the reader, are probably one, too, without realizing it.

Social influence marketing is about recognizing, accounting, and tapping into the fact that as your potential customer makes a purchasing decision, he's influenced by various circles of people through the conversations that he has with them online, when he shares his own social media and consumes theirs. But wait a minute. How does social influence marketing tie into social media marketing? These terms are increasingly used interchangeably, but it's worth noting that when talking about social influence marketing, the emphasis is on the social influencers versus social media, which invariably implies just marketing on the social platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Since this book covers marketing with social influencers and social media on both the social platforms and company Web sites and also emphasizes the importance of social influencers, I use the relatively newer term *social influence marketing* throughout the book.

REMEMBER

It isn't enough to market to the consumer anymore; as a marketer, you have to market to your potential customers' social influencers as well. And that's what social influence marketing is about.

## Understanding the fundamentals of influence

To understand how social influence works, you need to look at how people are influenced in the real world, face to face. Social influence isn't something new. Long before the Web, people asked each other for advice as they made purchasing decisions. What one person bought often inspired another to buy the same product, especially if the original purchaser said great things about the product. That's how human beings function; we're influenced and motivated by each other to do things. We're social beings, and sharing information on our experiences is all a part of social interaction.

Is influence bad? Of course not. More often than not, people seek that influence. People ask each other for advice; they share decision-making processes with friends and colleagues; they discuss their own experiences.

How much a person is influenced depends on multiple factors. The product itself is the most important one. When buying *low-consideration purchases* (those with a small amount of risk), people rarely seek influence, nor are they easily influenced by others. Buying toothpaste, for example, is a low-consideration purchase because each product may not be that different from the next one, and they're all fairly inexpensive — so you won't lose much money if you choose one

that doesn't fit your needs. On the other hand, buying a new car is typically a *high-consideration purchase* (a purchase that includes a large risk). The price of the car, the maintenance costs, and its reputation for its safety all contribute to making it a high-consideration purchase. Social influence plays a much bigger role in car purchases than in toothpaste decisions. Nissan recently used social influence marketing to sell its Nissan Cube, as shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2:
Selling the Nissan Cube with social media.
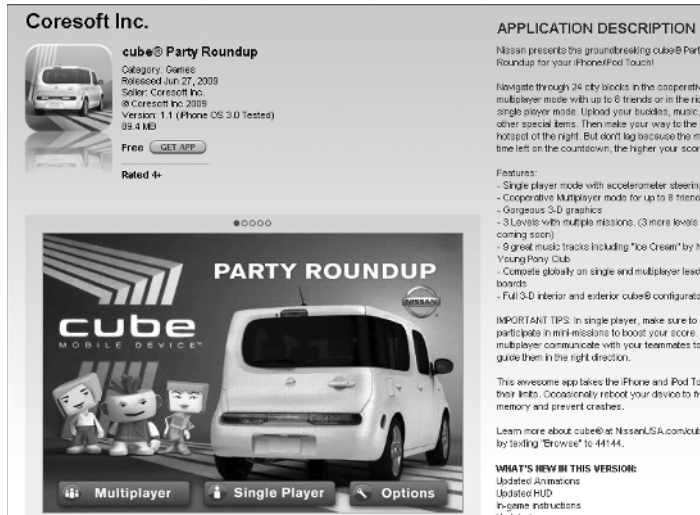
Social influence matters with every purchase, but it matters more with high-consideration purchases than low-consideration ones. Most consumers realize that when they're making high-consideration purchases, they can make better and more confident purchasing decisions when they take into account the advice and experience of others who have made those decisions before them. That's how influence works.

Considering the types of influencers

When discussing social influence marketing, colleagues often ask me whether this means that they should add product review features to e-commerce Web sites or advertise on social networks. Yes, product reviews and advertising are important, but there's more to social influence than those two things. When you think about social influence in the context of your marketing objectives, you must separate social influencers online into three types: referent, expert, and positional. These categories come from thinking that social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven pioneered in 1959.

As a marketer seeking to deploy social influence marketing techniques, the first question to answer is this: Which social influencers sway your consumers as they make purchasing decisions about your product? After you identify those social influencers, you can determine the best ways to market to them.

REMEMBER

Any major brand affinity or purchasing decision has referent, expert, and positional social influencers all playing distinct and important roles. Which one is most important may vary slightly based on the purchase, but the fact remains that you need to account for these three distinct types of social influencers in your marketing campaigns. If you're a marketer trying to positively affect a purchasing decision, you must market not just to the consumer but also to these influencers as well.

Referent influencers

A *referent influencer* is someone who participates on the social platforms. These users are typically in a consumer's social graph and influence brand affinity and purchasing decisions through consumer reviews, by updating their own status and Twitter feeds, and by commenting on blogs and forums. In some cases, the social influencers know the consumers personally.

Because the consumers know and trust their referent influencers, they feel confident that their advisers are also careful and punctilious. As they're people they trust, they value their advice and guidance over most other people. Referent influencers influence purchasing decision more than anyone else at the consideration phase of the marketing funnel, according to Fluent, the social influence marketing report from Razorfish.

For example, if I decide to make a high-consideration purchase, such as a car, I might start by going online and discussing different cars with a few friends in a discussion forum or on a social network. And then that weekend, I might meet those friends over coffee and carry on that discussion in person. They tell me about the cars they like, their own purchasing experiences, and which dealerships they've had experience with. This influence is considered *referent influence* because these friends sway me by the strength of their charisma and interpersonal skills, and they have this sway because I respect them.

Expert influencers

A consumer who's mulling over a high-consideration purchase might also consult an expert influencer. An *expert influencer* is an authority on the product that the consumer is considering purchasing. Also called *key influencers,* they typically have their own blogs, huge Twitter followings, and rarely know their audiences personally.

When I'm considering buying a car, suppose I don't turn just to friends for advice but also visit some car review Web sites like Edmunds.com (shown in Figure 1-3). On these review Web sites, experts rate, rank, and pass judgment on cars. As they put the cars through various tests and know the cars inside and out, their opinions matter. They're the expert social influencers — people who I may not know personally but are recognized as authorities in a certain field. Their influence is derived from the skills or expertise that they — or broadly speaking, their organization — possess based on training.

Positional influencers

A *positional influencer* is closest to both the purchasing decision and to the consumer. Called *peer influencers* sometimes, they are typically family members or part of the consumer's inner circle. They influence purchasing decisions most directly at the point of purchase and have to live with the results of their family member's or friend's decision as well.

Now I know that I can't make a high-consideration purchase like a car purchase without discussing it with my wife. Invariably, she'll drive the car, too, and sit in it as much as I will. It is as much her purchase as it is mine. Her opinion matters more than anyone else's in this case. After all, I need to discuss with her the relative pricing of the cars available and whether one is more suitable for our family versus another. This person derives her influence from her relative position and duties in relation to the actual consumer. She's closest to the purchasing decision and to the consumer and therefore has the most social influence.
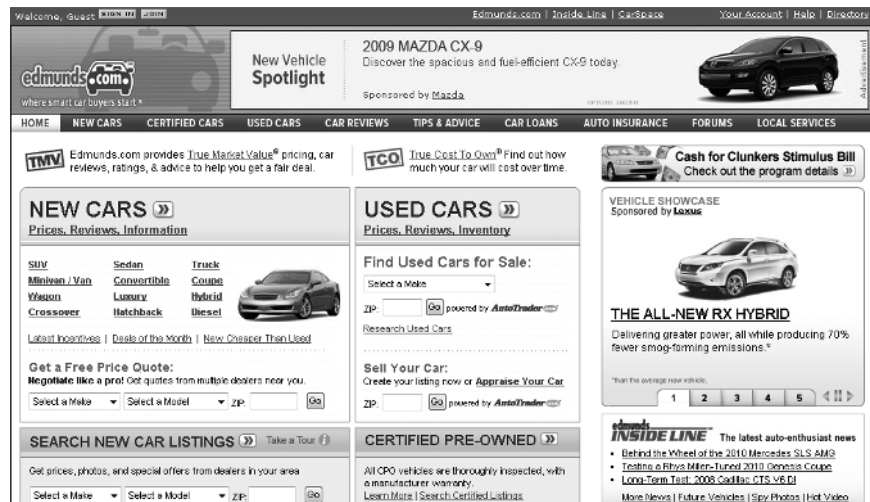

Figure 1-3: Edmunds.com.

Influencing on digital platforms

As I discuss earlier in the chapter, social influence impacts every purchasing decision, and always has in some form or other. Each time people make purchasing decisions, they ask each other for advice. Sometimes, they depend upon an expert's guidance, and in other cases, that advice comes from people they know.

So why is influence such a big deal today? This is because Internet and social media consumption specifically have hit the mainstream. For example, as of February 2009, the social-networking phenomenon Facebook had 175 million users, giving it a population larger than most countries. That's a lot of people talking about a lot of things (including products) to a lot of people!

People are making more and more purchasing decisions online every day. It's as natural to buy a product online as it is to go into a physical store. They buy clothes and shoes online, not to mention high-consideration items such as computers, cars (yes, cars), and jewelry. But that's not all. Not only are consumers buying online, but thanks to social media, they're conversing, socializing, and influencing each other online in a scale never seen before.

Call it a shift in Web behavior, but the way people make decisions in the real world is finally moving to the Internet in a big way. The social media platforms such as Facebook (shown in Figure 1-4), MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube are just a few of the places where people are asking each other for advice and guidance as they make purchasing decisions. Smart companies are realizing that they should no longer design their e-commerce Web sites to convince buyers to make purchasing decisions in isolation. Rather they need to design the Web sites to allow consumers to bring their social influencers into the decision-making process. As consumers, people expect and want that because that's how they're used to making their purchasing decisions. So that's why social influence marketing matters today. People are influencing and are being influenced by each other every day on the social network platforms, community Web sites, and destination sites.

TIP

You may need to put a lot of effort into convincing your managers how important the social media platforms are. Many of them may feel that it's a youth phenomenon, one that doesn't serve the interests of brands well. The best way to communicate these ideas and techniques to your staff is by organizing lunch-and-learn sessions and bringing in external speakers who can walk your managers through the major social platforms and how best to market on them. Sharing case studies from other brands always resonates well and goes a long way to establishing credibility.
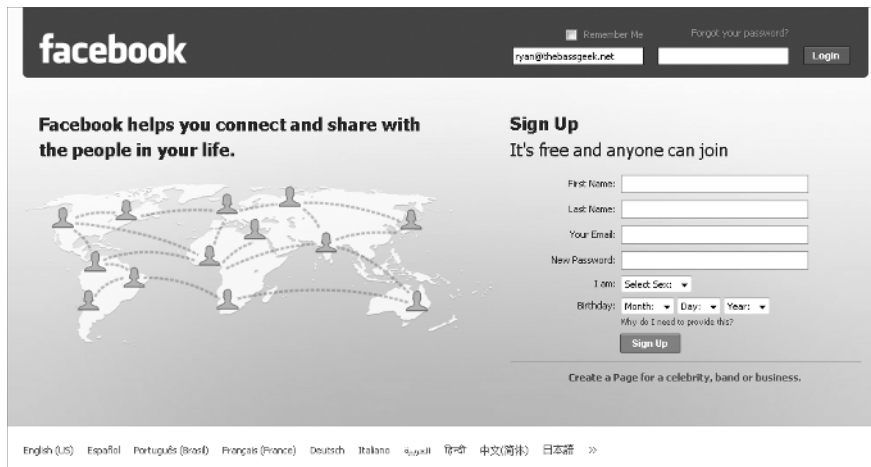
Figure 1-4:
Facebook.

Comparing Social Influence Marketing with Other Marketing Efforts

It isn't enough to deploy social influence marketing (SIM) in isolation of every other marketing effort. If you do, you're sure to fail. Your customers will notice that you have a disjointed, conflicted story — depending on where and how you're interacting with them. Therefore, it's important to understand how you can integrate your social influence marketing within your other more traditional marketing — direct mail, public relations, display advertising, and promotions.

WARNING! Some of the social influence marketing philosophies are in conflict with traditional public relations, media buying, direct mail, and promotions tactics. It's no use damning those forms of marketing and alienating your peers who focus on those areas. Put extra effort in partnering with your fellow employees as you practice these marketing techniques. Explain what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how it complements their efforts. If you discredit the other forms of marketing and the people behind them, it only hurts you in the long run.

Direct mail

Direct mail is about managing an active customer database and marketing to members of that database via circulars, catalogs, credit card applications, and other merchandising materials delivered to homes and businesses. You've probably gotten a lot of direct mail over the years — perhaps mountains of

it — and at some point, you've probably wished that these companies would stop mailing you. That's all direct mail, and whether you like it or not, direct mail has been a very successful form of marketing. The catalog industry logs billions of dollars in sales because of it.

That will change with social influence marketing. Of all the areas of marketing, direct mail is one that will be most affected in the long run. Before you start worrying that your mail carrier will stuff your mailbox (or your e-mail inbox through e-mail marketing) even more than usual, consider this: Direct mail is most successful when the mail is targeted and personalized. That means it's reaching the people who really care about the offers (or are most likely to take advantage of them), and it's personalized toward the recipients' needs in a voice and style that's appealing to them. Pretty straightforward, isn't it?

Direct mail is as successful as the marketer's customer database. The database should contain names and addresses of people who are open to receiving direct mail. But when people stop trusting the marketing efforts of large corporations and instead switch to each other for advice, that's when direct mail loses its power. Statistically, I know that consumers are now more likely to depend on each other for advice and information than they are on the corporations that are marketing to them. With consumers who are even more connected to each other through social media than before, it has gotten easier for them to reach out to one another for that advice. That means that when they see a piece of direct mail, they're less likely to depend on it. They'd rather go online and ask a friend for advice or search for a product online than look at that flyer in the mail. That's why direct mail dropped 3 percent in 2008. And as marketers harness social influence marketing tactics more, it will see further drops.

There's another side to the story, though. The more data that you can capture about your customers through social influence marketing tactics, the more opportunities you have to feed your direct mail database. That's just a factor of consumers doing more online, sharing more of themselves, and opting into direct mail efforts in exchange for information or acceptance into an online community. Your database may get richer with social influence marketing in the mix, but the value of it may decrease — although that doesn't mean that you can't use direct mail as a starting point to jump-start an online community, sustain interest in it, or reward participation through mailing coupons

Public relations

Among the earliest proponents of social media were digital-savvy public relations experts. Many of them entered this space by treating social media just as they have treated the mainstream media. These professionals equated *buzz* (how much people talk about a specific product or brand) in the social

media realm with press mentions in the mainstream media. These PR experts identified the influential (*influence* defined as those having the most reach) bloggers and tweeters and started showering them with the same kind of attention that they had been bestowing on the mainstream media. They sent them press releases in advance, offered exclusive interviews, invited them to dinners, commented on their blogs, and carefully tracked how much their brands were mentioned and how positively.

For PR professionals, this approach made perfect sense. Arguably, they recognized early on how powerful social media could be and were among the first to track brand mentions and participate in conversations. In fact, many of the social media experts today are former public relations professionals who've taken the time to understand how social media works and how they can leverage it to support a company's or a brand's objectives. Many PR professionals also understand how bad press and traditional PR disasters can be amplified by social media if not addressed immediately.

But life isn't that simple, and the relationship between public relations and social media is a complex one — which is something that the savviest of PR professionals understand and have always understood. Public relations is fundamentally about managing the press (mainstream or alternative) and pushing a company's agenda out to the press as much as possible. Whether it's the mainstream or alternative media, it doesn't matter. From a public relations professional's perspective, the press is the press, and they're only as good as their ability to amplify a company's message. That's where the problem lies.

When I look at social influence marketing and how it harnesses social media, some of its core tenets are in conflict with public relations. For example, social influence marketing is about social influencers influencing each other through social media. The focus is on the social influencers influencing each other and not on the PR professionals influencing people in the social media realm. The difference is that as consumers, we're trusting and depending upon each other more for advice than on large corporations. The PR professionals, for all their sincerity and skill, will still push a company's message as forcefully as they can — and in that, it conflicts with social influence marketing.

Is there a remedy? Not necessarily, but as you deploy social influence marketing campaigns, be sensitive to the fact that your goals and aspirations may be in conflict with your PR organization if it hasn't embraced social media or social influence marketing. Have a conversation with them early on, find ways to collaborate and delineate boundaries, too — who does what, who reaches out to whom, and how much space is given to authentic social influencers to do the influencing versus the PR professionals. And as you do this, keep in mind that for many PR professionals, social influence marketing is an evolution of PR. That's a good thing providing for even more opportunities to collaborate.

Display advertising

When it comes to buying display advertising (also referred to as *media planning and buying*) on Web sites where your customers spend time, social influence marketing plays an important role. *Display advertising* is about identifying Web sites your target customers visit, buying ad space on those Web sites, and then measuring how much those ads are viewed and clicked upon. It's as much an art as it's a science because knowing which sites your customers visit, where they're most likely to engage with an advertisement (where on the site as well), whether the site charges the appropriate amount for the advertisement, and how much that advertising affects purchasing is not always easy. Trust me. I work with media buyers all the time, and their jobs are harder than you think.

But the display advertising space is important even in an economic downturn. The reason is simple: It's one of the most measurable forms of advertising, especially in relation to print and television, along with search engine advertising. You can track who views the advertisement, what they do with it, and in some cases, whether they eventually buy the product based on that advertisement. It's no surprise that the relationship to social influence marketing is an important one as a result.

This relationship with social influence marketing takes various forms. Here are some of those connection points:

- ✔ **Market to the social influencers who surround the customer, as well as the customer.**

  One of the ways in which you market to those influencers is using display advertising. So rather than just placing advertisements on Web sites that your customers visit, you place some advertisements (doesn't have to be a large percentage of your budget) on Web sites that their social influencers frequent, too. Is this as measurable as those advertisements targeting your customers directly? Maybe not, because these influencers are less likely to click the ads and make a purchase. But nevertheless, they remember the brand and they influence your customers.

- ✔ **Place display advertising on the social platforms — like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube — that your customers frequent.**

  Most social platforms accept display advertising in some form, and this serves as an important part of their revenue model. Figure 1-5 shows display advertisements on YouTube. See Chapters 6 and 10 for more on this.

Figure 1-5:
Placement
ads on
YouTube.
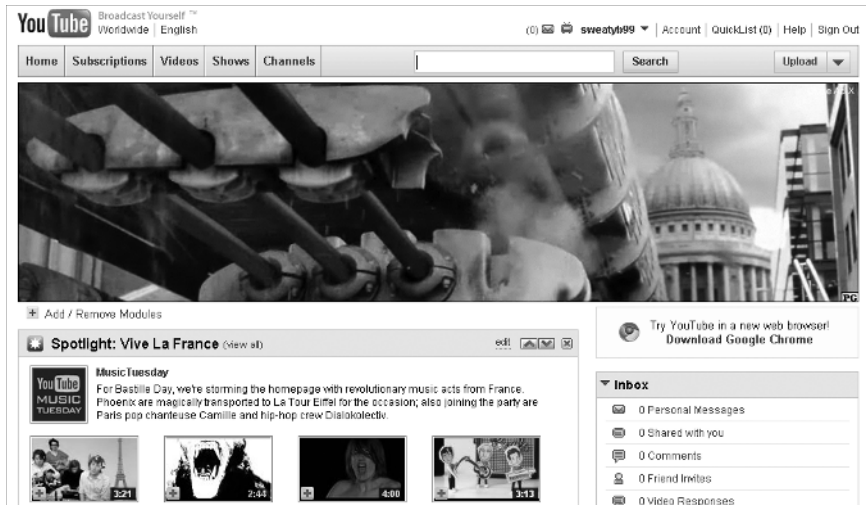
> Granted, display advertising on social platforms generally produces bad results (users don't notice the advertisements, and they don't click them) but the ad formats for social platforms are still evolving. One example is *appvertising,* where advertisements are placed within applications that reside on social networks. These produce better results. Another innovation is where consumers are asked to rate the ads that they're viewing. This helps the platform target ads more appropriately to them in the future.

✔ **Use interactive, social advertising.**

> Think about this scenario for moment: You visit a major Web site like CNN.com and see a large advertisement on the right side. The advertisement asks you a question, and you're invited to respond to that question from within the ad unit. What's more, you can see other responses to the question within the ad unit. That's an example of the ad unit becoming a platform for a social conversation. There aren't too many examples of social ads online, but I'm seeing more companies experiment in this space. Figure 1-6 shows how one ad appears on CNN.com. See Chapter 10 for more on this.

Promotions

Promotions is another important type of marketing activity that's affected by social influence marketing, due to the fact that as people communicate with each other more, they have less time to participate in product promotions. But it also presents unique opportunities for marketers to put the potential of social influence marketing to good use.
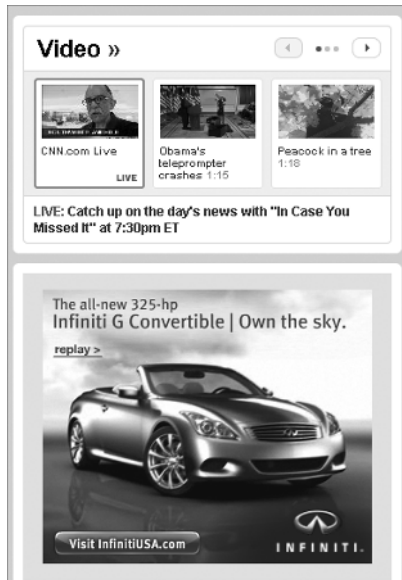
Figure 1-6:
Advertising
on CNN.

Consider this: Promotions are primarily about incentives that are designed to stimulate the purchase or sale of a product in a given period. Promotions usually take the form of coupons, sweepstakes, contests, product samples, rebates, and tie-ins. Most of these promotions are designed as one-off activities linking the marketer to specific customers. However, by deploying social influence marketing concepts, you can design promotions that require customers to draw in their social influencers, whether it's to participate in the contest or sweepstakes with them or to play an advisory role. By designing the promotion to require social influencer participation (it needs to be positioned as friends participating), the specific promotion may get a lot more attention than it normally would have. I discuss this in Chapters 4 and 6.

For example, the promotions that Victoria's Secret has run around virtual gifting on Facebook all require the participants to identify people to whom to give the gifts. By virtue of the promotion definition, twice the number of people are exposed to Victoria's Secret in that promotion than normal.

Taking Social Influence Beyond Marketing

As I hint in the earlier sections, the benefits of social influence marketing extend beyond the core domain of marketing. If you harness the power of social influence marketing to change other parts of your business, you stand

to gain the most. You can use SIM to mobilize groups of people to take specific actions, make marketers better corporate citizens, and further social change — and through those efforts, enhance a brand, too.

Using social influencers to mobilize

Social influencers, obviously, play an important role in getting people to do things. And this extends beyond the world of marketing. What makes it different on the Web is that it's a lot easier to do now. Author Howard Rheingold was one of the first thinkers to identify this phenomenon in a book titled, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Perseus Books). He discussed how the street protestors of the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) conference used Web sites, cellphones, and other "swarming" tactics to organize, motivate each other, and plan protests. The smart mobs (an intentionally contradictory term) could behave intelligently because of their exponentially increasing links to each other. Through those links, they influenced and motivated each other to perform tasks, form shared opinions, and act together. They used social influence marketing tactics on themselves to accomplish specific objectives.

More recently, in *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (Penguin Press), Clay Shirky also focuses on the power of organizing and influencing using social technologies. As he explains, every Web page can be considered a latent community waiting for people to interact, influence, and mobilize one another. People with shared interests visit the Web page at various times and often seek out their peers' opinions — not just opinions from the Web page's author. Shirky also discusses how Wikipedia, a user-contributed encyclopedia, can grow exponentially, publish efficiently, and self-correct using nontraditional corporate hierarchies.

I use the Seattle WTO protests and Wikipedia as examples to demonstrate how much social influence extends beyond the traditional realms of marketing into dramatically different domains. Driving the success of the Seattle WTO protests and the Wikipedia publishing model were two factors: social technologies that allowed people to contribute, participate, and converse easily, and technologies that allowed people to see what others were doing. The social influencers were at the heart of these efforts and many of the other smart mob initiatives over the years. Most recently, Twitter directly enabled protesters in Iran to organize in the wake of their recent elections, to such an extent that the U.S. State Department asked Twitter to delay a scheduled maintenance so that it wouldn't disrupt communications among the Iranian citizens as they protested the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

But bringing this back to your company, it also demonstrates that you can harness those very same social influence marketing philosophies to achieve other corporate objectives as well. I discuss them further in Chapters 3 and 12.

REMEMBER

Social influence marketing isn't just about how people influence each other by what they say on the social media platforms and on Web sites across the Web. It also happens when people observe what others are doing online. As a result, if you'd love others to mimic a certain type of customer behavior, make that behavior visible to everyone visiting the Web site. I don't just listen to people I admire; I also copy what they're doing.

Marketers as better corporate citizens

As has been the case in the last few years, marketers are increasingly supporting and furthering specific social causes that are in alignment with their brands. This win-win situation results in the marketers getting more favorable press for their brands and the specific causes getting much needed sponsorship, too. One area where marketers are increasingly harnessing social influence marketing tactics is in amplifying their efforts in the cause realm.

Why causes? The causes have all the ingredients to make a successful social influence marketing effort. They are usually time bound, have broad appeal, and are subjects that people like to discuss with each other. Marketers who tap into causes see their brands benefiting from halo effects by being associated with important social concerns and by gaining visibility with much larger audiences than they normally would have. If you're a marketer, it bodes well to directly support a cause, encourage its supporters to harness social influence marketing tactics, or sponsor it indirectly. And then even more so, it makes sense to market your own cause efforts using social influence marketing tactics in a measurable fashion

Early in 2009, Procter & Gamble (one of the largest consumer-goods companies in the world) organized a social media education session for all its marketers. But instead of having a series of presentations by employees, P&G invited social media experts to visit their headquarters. The company divided the social media experts into teams and paired them with their own marketers. The teams were tasked with raising money for Tide's Loads of Hope disaster relief campaign using social media platforms to sell T-shirts. (The Loads of Hope Web site is shown in Figure 1-7.) The winning team raised $50,000, and Tide matched their contribution. Through this effort, P&G positioned itself as a better corporate citizen, raised money for a good cause, and was able to educate its marketers about the potential of social media by actually practicing social media marketing. Some detractors argued that this was just a one-day effort that got more attention than it deserved, but the fact that so much money was raised in so little time is admirable.

WARNING!

As you consider tapping into social influence marketing to amplify your brand's efforts in the cause realm, keep in mind that consumers are increasingly skeptical of these efforts. Make sure that you're donating enough to make the effort genuine and meaningful for everyone involved.

Figure 1-7:
Tide's Loads
of Hope.
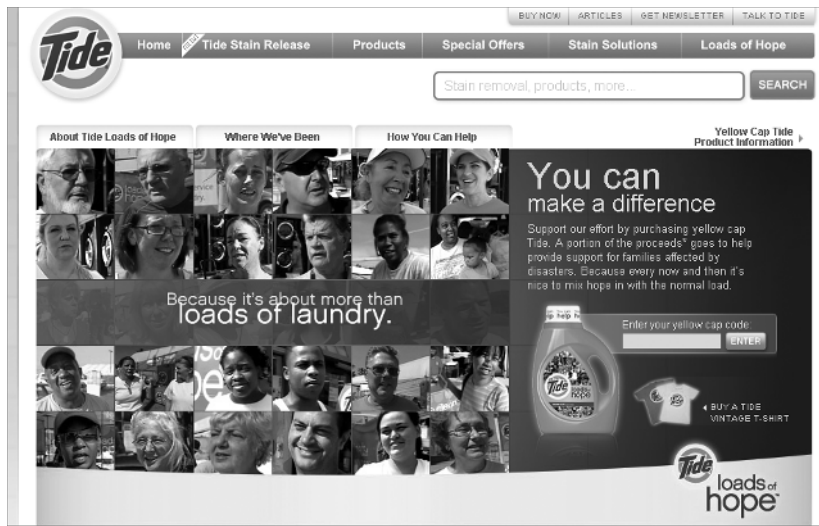
Social graphs for social change

There's more to social causes than your ability to amplify your efforts around causes using social influence marketing tactics. A larger change is afoot that demands attention, even if doesn't directly relate to your objectives. The Web allows individuals to financially support a cause at the very moment that they're inspired and then encourage their friends who reside in their social graphs to do the same.

When an individual provides monetary support for a cause, he can — in that very moment, using the social platforms and his own social media — broadcast his effort to his network of friends and associates. By doing so, he becomes a social influence marketer, spreading the word about the cause and socially influencing his friends to contribute as well. This instant, *viral affect* (the phrase comes from diseases and how they can spread rapidly from person to person) is collectively (and strongly) influencing how causes are promoted and funded — more so than the traditional big corporation backing strategies. This means that you, as a marketer, benefit from the halo affect of supporting a cause, but you can't just support it — you must be willing to participate in this viral affect the same way. Here are a few examples in this realm:

✔ **Causes:** This Facebook and MySpace application (which is available at www.causes.com) is a perfect example of nonprofit organizations using social media as marketing and fundraising tools. (You can see the Causes application's home page in Figure 1-8.) It allows you to choose a nonprofit, contribute funds to it, and track how many of your friends go on to support that cause after seeing your contributions or receiving your invitation to contribute. Within a year of its launch, the application had 12 million users supporting approximately 80,000 nonprofit causes

worldwide. Users raised $2.5 million for 19,445 different charitable orga-
nizations. Facebook reported 60,000 daily uses of the application, while
MySpace tracked 25,000 daily uses.

✔ **Oxfam Unwrapped:** The English charity Oxfam uses technology to help
donors understand a problem more deeply and help them appreciate the
difference that they're making. If you'd like to give the gift of giving, you
can go to www.oxfamunwrapped.com (shown in Figure 1-9) and buy
books, bags of seeds, clean water, and even goats in your friend's name.
Oxfam delivers the gift to someone in need, and also sends your friend a
gift card. The site is a core component of Oxfam's fund-raising efforts.

When Oxfam launched this program, the fact that you could buy a goat
for someone in Darfur was more buzz worthy than any other market-
ing effort. Needless to say, it got people talking about Darfur, Oxfam,
and goats, with people forming online communities based on these
topics and the other charities that they support. In this case, the donors
become social influencers.

✔ **charity: water:** This U.S.-based nonprofit provides clean water to devel-
oping communities using a Twitter festival (www.twestival.com) to
promote the charity and encourage others to donate money as well. (See
Figure 1-10.) The Twitter festival was held in 202 cities around the world,
bringing together people from Twitter to support a cause. On February
12, 2009, the participating cities raised $250,000, with counting still going
on. This was done with micropayments by participants related to the
cause. Participants spread the word about it and socially influenced
each other to contribute as well. The event was organized 100 percent
by volunteers and 100 percent of the money raised went directly to the
charity. You can find out how much your city raised on this Web site:
www.charitywater.org/twestival/index.html.

Figure 1-8:
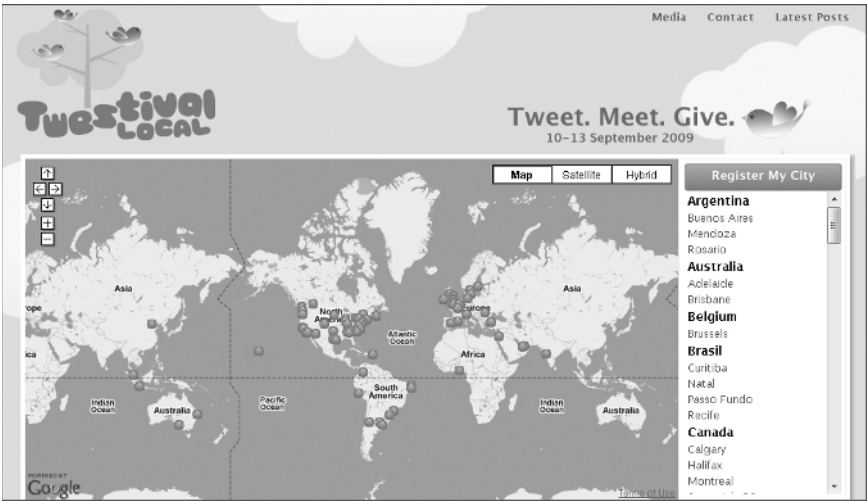Causes.
com.

Figure 1-9:
Oxfam
Unwrapped.

Figure 1-10:
Twestival.
com.