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Chapter **1**

Understanding Social Media Marketing

When marketing online, you design websites, run display banner advertising, publish videos to YouTube, and push your website 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 buy 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 over 300 million people using the web on a regular basis in the United States alone and approximately 3.2 billion users globally, 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 and the different roles that people play in the realm of social media, especially because social media itself has changed over the last decade with the rise of smartphones.

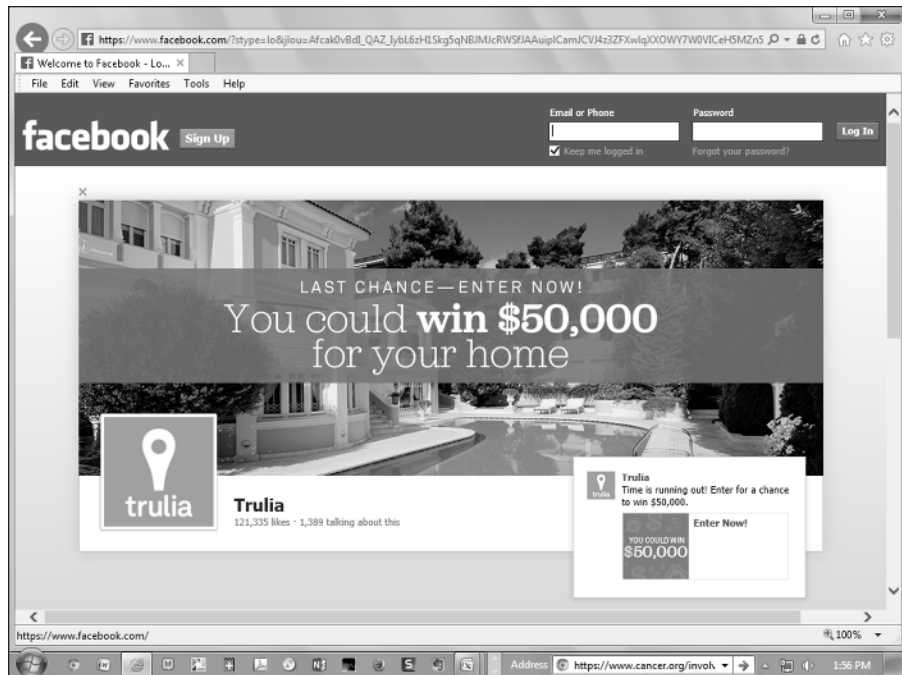
This chapter discusses the fundamentals of social media marketing: what it is, how it works, who the players are, and what it means in the context of your other marketing efforts.

Defining Social Media Marketing

A discussion of any subject needs to begin with a definition, and so here's the one for social media marketing: *Social media marketing (SMM)* is a technique that employs *social media* (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as social networks, blogs, micro-blogs, message boards, podcasts, social bookmarks, communities, wikis, and vlogs).

Social media (which has probably been one of the most hyped buzzwords of the last decade) 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 website, the family photographs she uploads to a photo-sharing service, the conversations she has with friends in a social network, and the blog posts she publishes or comments on. That's all social media, and it's making everyone in the world a content publisher and arbitrator of content. It's democratizing the web. Facebook, shown in Figure 1-1, is the most popular social network. It allows you to connect with friends and share information in a matter of minutes. Facebook has 2.41 billion monthly active users around the world.

FIGURE 1-1:
Facebook is just
one example,
albeit the largest,
of the many
media platforms.



Learning about the Roles People Play

To look at the framework of social media marketing, we need to look at the different roles played by those engaged in social media. They are as follows:

- » **Marketers:** They publish and share content online to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs. Today's marketer looks nothing like the marketers of the twentieth century. Customers now own the brand conversation. The opportunity to interrupt and annoy those customers has dwindled. Customers now meet businesses on their own terms. In the following section, we discuss the new role that marketers have to play.
- » **Influencers:** Several types of influencers contribute to the decisions customers make. They may be everyday people who influence the consumer as he makes a purchasing decision. Depending on the decision, 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 put, the people who influence a brand affinity and purchasing decision are the social influencers. They may exert this influence 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. We discuss the specific types of influencers in the section “Understanding the role of the influencer.”

» **Platforms:** We used to believe that the social media platforms on which marketers, influencers, and consumers published content were neutral technologies without playing a role in whose content got promoted and shared the most. However, in recent years, the actions of the major social media platforms have shown that their leadership has an active role to play in what gets promoted, shared, and inversely censored on a social media marketing platform. If you’re a small company, their influence may not be noticeable but for larger companies who market and sell many products online, understanding how the platforms and their leaders think about content is important.



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 so that they, in turn, influence either overtly or just by what they publish and share online. And that’s what social media marketing is about.

Changing roles of the social media marketer

Anyone who has worked in online marketing for a while has watched amazing changes take place. Starting in 1994, one of this book’s authors, Stephanie, worked at AOL, watched that company and other online services help start a social media revolution that continues to change the world. At that time, the other author, Shiv, created his first website using HTML 1.0 and added the ability to comment at the end of each page.

Since then, a lot has changed, and today many marketers are looking for a specific set of rules to follow to be successful. We can assure you that there aren’t any, but there *are* some guidelines. Following are some of the actions that social media marketers must take if they want their company to compete successfully in the new social marketplace:

» **Become the top persuader.**

When you lead an SMM team, you need to understand that persuasion is your most important tool. You persuade your team that you can help its members achieve success, and you persuade your customer to buy your product. Throughout this book, we discuss the role that influence plays in social media and in the art of persuasion. Before you influence, you need to figure out the persuasive message that will sell. When you do that, you can unleash the groups that influence your customers.

»» Use a variety of distribution channels.

The key mistake that some new social media marketers make is to focus solely on social media platforms to carry their message. This does half the job. Although it gets people's attention, it doesn't always get them to the sale. For example, imagine that you have just tweeted about a solution for stain removal. Unless you provide a link to your product and a place for discussion and reviews, you have a missed opportunity. Draw a map of all your channels (blog, website, Facebook page, newsletter, and so on), and use it whenever you plan a new campaign. You need a link to all your venues.

»» Reinvent your strategy to emphasize value.

Value is a secret weapon in this economy. When you boil away all the other ingredients of a product sale, you uncover value. This is a tricky concept because value is in the eye of the beholder. Understanding what imparts that value should underlie your entire marketing strategy. Think about your current SMM campaign. Are you focusing on features and benefits or on how the product makes your customer feel? For example, some companies focus on making people feel smart and sexy when they buy a certain model car. By the same token, others may focus on models that emphasize safety and responsibility. If you understand the value, you can establish a bond with your buyer.

»» Market to inspire.

The globalization of our world via the Internet has given us a window into the lives of others. It's hard to ignore the poverty and disease that plague much of the world's population. Many companies are seizing the opportunity to use their businesses to help make an impact. SMM encourages awareness of the connection we share with others. Think about how your business can participate.

In fact, in the last few years alone, purpose driven marketing, which is about defining why you do what you do, has become one of the most important ways to engage customers. Dove's #speakbeautiful movement Twitter campaign, which encouraged women to speak positively about themselves, is a perfect example of this type of marketing as it flowed naturally from Dove's broader purpose of improving the self-esteem and confidence of women. It wasn't just about selling a product but demonstrating that the brand has a more meaningful role to play in people's lives.

»» Create and curate content.

Offering engaging content is a big part of any SMM campaign. You need an editorial calendar that lays out your topics, creation tools, and deadlines. You also need to focus on curating content already published on the web. Becoming a trusted source of information is key to getting your customers to visit often. It's important to remember that your customers are leading highly

engaged and entertaining lives in the social media world. Your content can't just be about your product. It needs to be valuable to them and their lives.

» **Know when to resist the next shiny object.**

As you well know, new web tools pop up daily. The best way to avoid being distracted is to write down your objectives. The last thing you want to say to yourself is, "Everyone is using such and such, so we should use it." Place your objectives in a prominent place and refer to them often. If they change, revise the document. But whatever you do, don't try to do something on every social platform — you'll quickly discover that you don't have the tools, training, and — most critically — the resources to support all the tools.

» **Be prepared to be wrong.**

This is a tough one. In your role as marketer, you want to lead your company to successive victories. SMM is not a sure thing. You need to be prepared to experiment and change course using the feedback that you get from customers. You may start with a small idea and develop it into a full-blown campaign. It's unlikely that you can start out with a very expensive big effort and not have to correct along the way. When management and staff start out with the notion that they are testing and experimenting, changes in direction won't seem as shocking. This cuts down on wear and tear of the psyche for everyone. It also limits the risks to your core marketing efforts while you learn this space.

Understanding the role of the influencer

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 about 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, not to mention the fact that you want to identify with a certain brand versus another one. Social influence plays a much bigger role in car purchases than in toothpaste decisions. Mercedes-Benz has used social media marketing time and again to leverage influencers in motivating consumers to purchase its cars. The Mercedes-Benz *Take The Wheel* campaign for which they hired five top Instagram photographers to each take the wheel of a new Mercedes CLA was a standout example. (Figure 1-2 shows the webpage for this campaign.) Whoever got the most likes on Instagram when publishing about the car and their roadtrips got to keep the car. So as you can imagine, the photographers really worked hard!



FIGURE 1-2:
The Mercedes-Benz Take The Wheel campaign.



TIP

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 media marketing, people often ask us whether this means that they should add product review features to e-commerce websites 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 media 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.



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.

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. *Social graph* is a term popularized by Marc Zuckerberg of Facebook and is used to describe the relationships that people may have on a social network and how they connect to one another.

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

For example, if Shiv decides to make a high-consideration purchase such as a car, he might start by going online and discussing different cars with a few friends on Facebook or via Twitter. And then that weekend, he might meet those friends over coffee and carry on that discussion in person. They tell him 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 him by the strength of their charisma and interpersonal skills, and they have this sway because he respects them. What's worth pointing out, though, is that the friends whom he knows to be most informed about cars will probably influence him more than the others.

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 and huge Twitter followings, and rarely know their audiences personally.

When considering buying a car, suppose Shiv doesn't turn just to friends for advice, but also visits some car review websites like Edmunds (www.edmunds.com, shown in Figure 1-3). On these review websites, experts rate, rank, and pass judgment on cars. Because they put the cars through various tests and know the cars inside and out, their opinions matter. They're the expert social influencers — people whom Shiv 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.

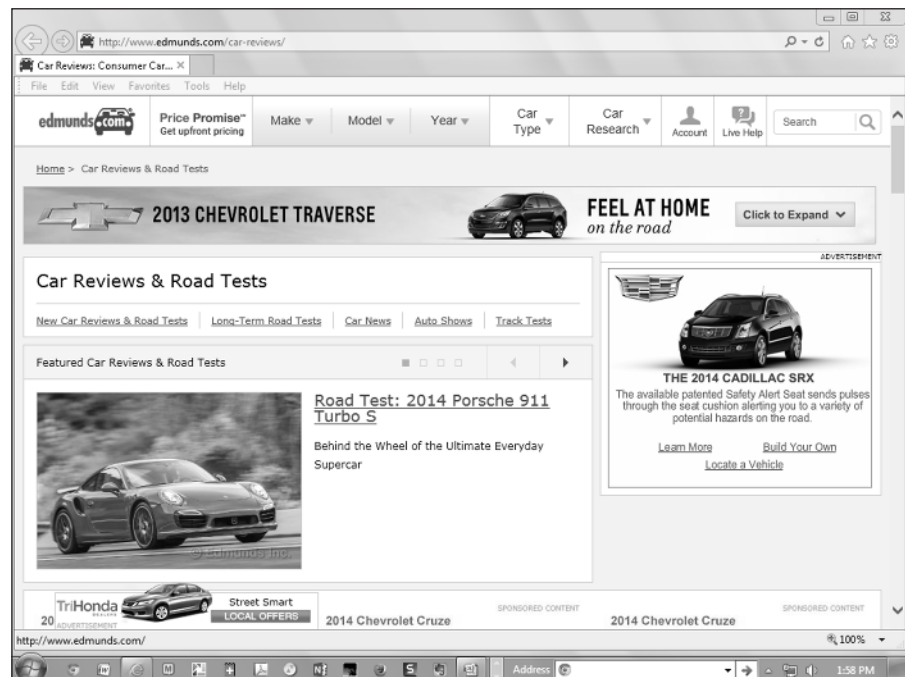


FIGURE 1-3:
The Edmunds car
view website.

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.

As Shiv says, "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.

Influencing on digital platforms

As we 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 consumption, and social media consumption specifically, have hit the mainstream. For example, as of June 2019, the social network platform Facebook had 2.41 billion users worldwide, giving it a population larger than any single country in the world, including China and India. That's a lot of people talking about a lot of things (including products) to a lot of people! But there's more to it than that. Social media traffic referrals have risen dramatically in the last few years. Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter have 18 percent, 7.5 percent, 0.73 percent, and 0.73 percent, respectively, of global referrals per Shareaholic (February 2018). These numbers show how much people are also acting on the influence of others — they're visiting the websites that they're being told to visit.

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. People 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 also conversing, socializing, and influencing each other online on 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, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube (shown in Figure 1-4), 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 websites to convince buyers to make purchasing decisions in isolation. Rather, they need to design the websites 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. That's why social media marketing matters today. People are influencing and are being influenced by each other every day on the social network platforms, community websites, and destination sites.

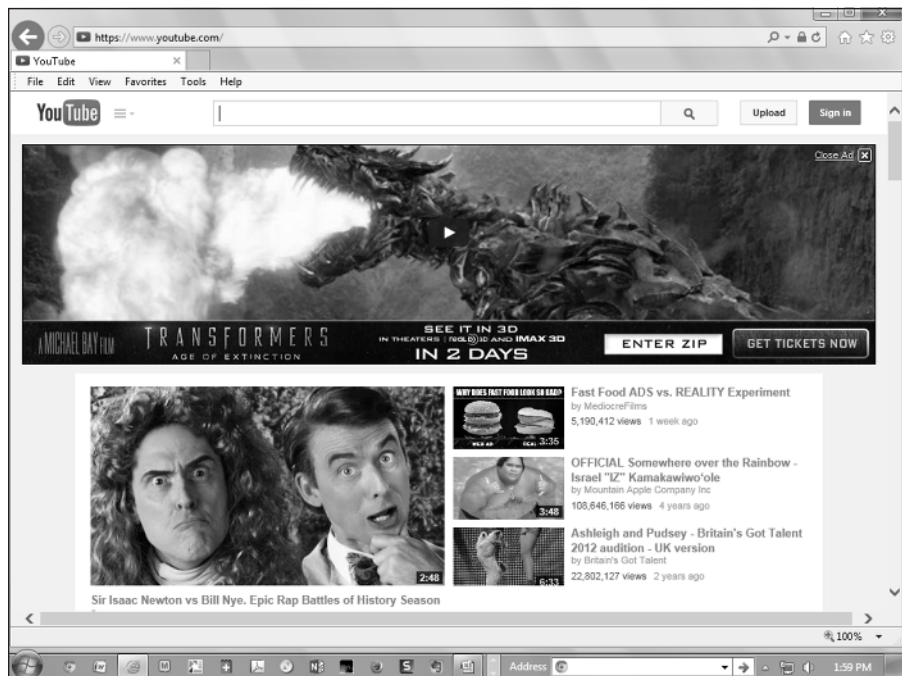


FIGURE 1-4:
YouTube.



TIP

You may need to put a lot of effort into convincing your managers how important the social media platforms are. 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.

Comparing Social Media Marketing with Other Marketing Efforts

It isn't enough to deploy social media marketing 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 media marketing within your other, more traditional marketing — direct mail, public relations, display advertising, and promotions.



WARNING

Some of the social media 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 has logged billions of dollars in sales because of it.

However, that has been impacted by social media 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 email 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, we 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. And as marketers harness social media marketing tactics more, it could see further drops.

There's another side to the story, though. The more data that you can capture about your customers through social media 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 media 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. The solution? Think about how you collect information about your consumers differently and, more important, how you share information back to them. It doesn't have to only be via mail or only via social media; knowing when to use what form of communication is key. More on this in later chapters.

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 communications agenda out to the world 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 we look at marketing and how it harnesses social media, some of its core tenets are in conflict with public relations. For example, social media 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 media marketing. But still, here's something extremely important to consider: The more forward-looking public relations experts approach PR from a broader communications perspective and have taken the time and energy to understand the space deeply. Those who do that are much better equipped to understand and market through social media than other professionals.

Is there a remedy for conflicts between departments? Not necessarily, but as you deploy social media 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 media marketing. Have a conversation with its staff 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 media marketing is an evolution of PR. That's a good thing, providing for even more opportunities to collaborate. And, of course, remember that you may have peers in the public relations department who could teach you a thing or two about social media marketing as well!

Online advertising

When it comes to buying online advertising (also referred to as *digital media planning and buying*) on websites where your customers spend time, social media marketing plays an important role. *Online advertising* is about identifying websites that your target customers visit, buying ad space on those websites, and then

measuring how much those ads are viewed and clicked. It's as much an art as it is 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. We work with media buyers all the time, and their jobs are harder than you think, especially in the world of digital ad exchanges, data management platforms, and remnant inventory. (Books could be written on each of those terms alone.)

But the online 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 those who view 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 media marketing is an important one as a result.

This relationship with social media 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 websites that your customers visit, you place some advertisements (doesn't have to be a large percentage of your budget) on websites 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 influence your customers.

» **Communicate and advertise on the social platforms — such as Facebook and YouTube — that your customers frequent.**

Most social platforms accept advertising in some form, and this serves as an important part of their revenue model. Figure 1-5 shows an eBay display advertisement on YouTube.

Granted, display advertising on social platforms used to produce bad results (users didn't notice the advertisements and didn't click them), but the ad formats for social platforms are evolving, and today Facebook is the second-largest advertising platform on the Internet after Google. One example of the evolution, is video-based advertising in the Facebook newsfeed itself. Another innovation that has been honed over the last two years is where consumers are asked to like the ads that they're viewing on Facebook, resulting in their action appearing more aggressively in the newsfeeds of their friends. This helps the platform target ads more appropriately to them in the future.

» Use interactive social advertising.

Think about this scenario for a moment: You visit a major website like www.cnn.com and see a large advertisement on the right side. The advertisement asks you to sign up for suggestions about local deals in your neighborhood. That's an example of the ad unit becoming a platform for social interaction. There aren't too many examples of social ads online, but we're seeing more companies experiment in this space. Figure 1-6 shows how an ad appears on CNN's website.

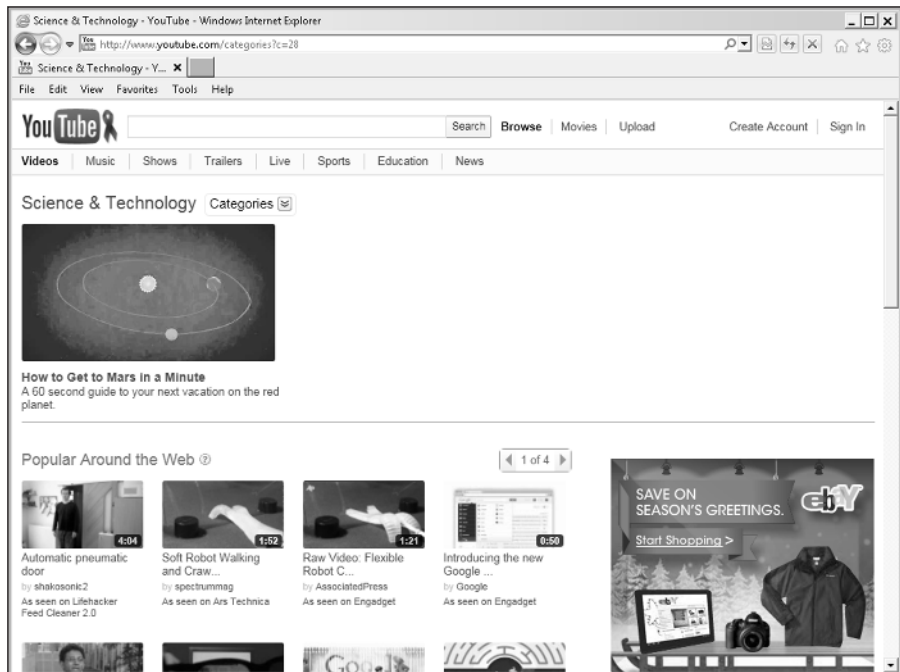
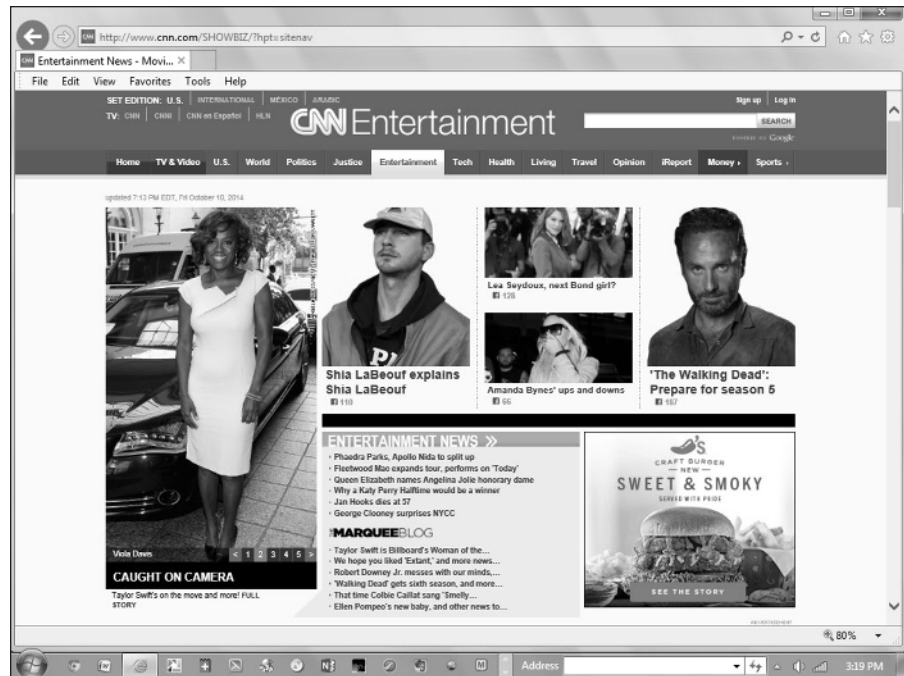


FIGURE 1-5:
An eBay
placement ad on
YouTube.

Promotions

Promotions are another important type of marketing activity that's affected by social influence marketing, owing 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 media 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. What's more, you can now design promotions geared directly to driving social influence among people in a given network. We discuss promotions in Chapter 4.

Taking Social Influence Beyond Marketing

As we hint in the earlier sections, the benefits of social media 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 SMM 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 social influence 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* (Basic Books). He discusses how the street protestors of the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) conference used websites, cell-phones, 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.

In a seminal book, *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.

We 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.

Twitter directly enabled protesters in Iran to organize in the wake of their 2009 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. And arguably, one of the key factors that drove the Arab Spring and the fall of the Egyptian government in March of 2011, was the ability to use social media to organize on a mass scale quickly as well as share media about the protests around the world at a time when the official government channels of communication were blocking everything. In fact, many people believe that the simple Facebook status update “Advice to the youth of Egypt: Put vinegar or onion under your scarf for tear gas” significantly helped the protesters.

More recently, on March 20, 2014, the Turkish government blocked Twitter following the circulation of leaked recordings that implicated the Turkish prime minister and members of his inner circle in sweeping corruption allegations. Although people hadn't mobilized through Twitter, the Turkish government was worried that the leaked recordings would spread through the platform like wildfire and enable people to mobilize against the government. Just that fear was enough to make the prime minister order the blocking of Twitter.

In a similar fashion, social media became a battleground in Hong Kong's protests in late 2019. Pro-democracy protestors used social media as a way to galvanize, document, and organize large-scale protests. It was also used by both the government and the protestors as a tool to influence public opinion. From circulating images of protestors being injured while protesting to actual video clips of police brutality and campaign posters, Instagram was widely used by protestors to influence. The government used Instagram and Facebook to publish images and video clips of protestors disrupting traffic and vandalizing shops in the streets. With the protests being leaderless, social media's role as a connective tissue for the protestors was even more central to the protest than it had been in any other mobilization effort in the past.

But bringing the focus back to your company, this discussion of mobilization also demonstrates that you can harness those very same social media marketing philosophies to achieve other corporate objectives as well. We discuss those marketing philosophies further in Chapters 3 and 22.



REMEMBER

Social media marketing isn't just about how people influence each other by what they say on the social media platforms and on sites across the web. It also happens when people observe what others are doing online and offline. As a result, if you'd love others to mimic a certain type of customer behavior, make that behavior visible to everyone visiting the website. We don't just listen to people we admire; we 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 attention for their brands and the specific causes getting much needed sponsorship, too. One area where marketers are increasingly harnessing social media marketing tactics is in amplifying their efforts in the cause realm both to demonstrate that they have a business purpose that goes beyond profit and to better align with the values of their customers.

But why causes in particular? The causes have all the ingredients to make a successful social media 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 the halo effect 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 media marketing tactics, or sponsor it indirectly. Even better, it makes sense to market your own cause efforts using social media marketing tactics in a measurable fashion.

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 its headquarters. The company divided the social media experts into teams and paired them with the company's 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 website is shown in Figure 1-7.) The winning team raised \$50,000, and Tide matched that team's 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.

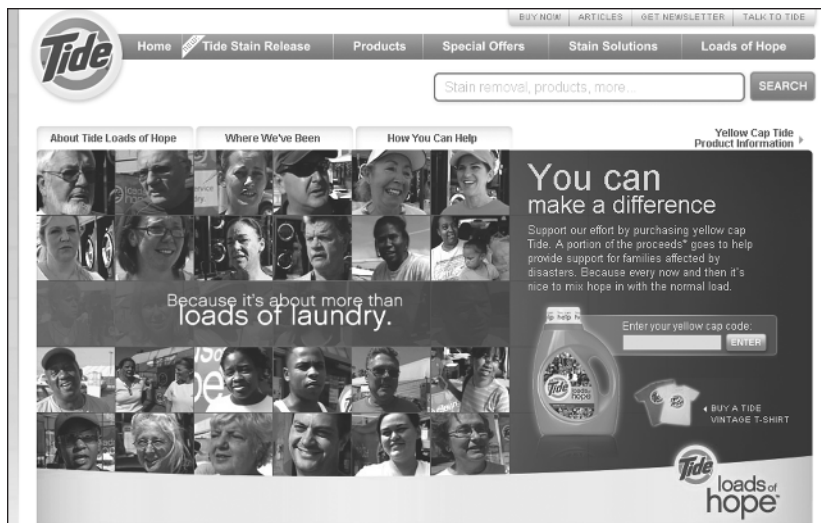


FIGURE 1-7:
Tide's Loads of
Hope.



WARNING

As you consider tapping into social media 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.

Social graphs for social change

There's more to social causes than your ability to amplify your efforts around causes using social media marketing tactics. A larger change is afoot that demands attention, even if it 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 media marketer, spreading the word about the cause and socially influencing his friends to contribute as well. This instant *viral effect* (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 strategies of backing by big corporations. This means that you, as a marketer, benefit from the halo effect 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:

- » **The Pepsi Refresh Project:** In 2010 and 2011, Pepsi chose to give away millions and millions of dollars to people across America who had ideas for refreshing their communities in positive ways. But instead of making this a traditional charity program, the Pepsi Refresh Project enabled people across the country to submit ideas that deserved funding. Ideas were chosen by other consumers. Ideas with the most votes were then funded. This award-winning social media program, which Shiv was fortunate to be a part of running, was social at the core (with more than 80 million votes and millions of conversations about the ideas) and moved the brand's brand health metrics forward. In fact, The Pepsi Refresh Project has inspired many more cause-driven marketing efforts and is today a Harvard Business School case study used to inspire marketers of tomorrow.
- » **Causes:** This Facebook application (which is available at www.causes.com) was 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 allowed 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 organizations. Over its lifetime, more than a billion actions have been taken via Causes, with 186 million registered users in 156 countries. Since the success of Causes, Facebook has incorporated many of its features into the DNA of its platform directly allowing people to start supporting causes, raising money for others, and tracking the success of their efforts all via the newsfeed itself.

- » **MTV's Enough Campaign:** In the spring of 2018, and in response to the horrific Parkland tragedy where a gunman shot students in a school, MTV leveraged its various platforms to amplify the voices of young people who were taking action to stop gun violence. When it came to social media, MTV turned over its Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat accounts to students who were taking action. MTV also supported the March for Our Lives protest in Washington DC by tapping celebrity influencers such as Lady Gaga, Jimmy Fallon, and Yara Shahidi to celebrate these young voices.
- » **Chase Community Giving:** Chase bank uses a simple but effective approach to cause marketing via its Chase Community Giving program. Since 2009, the bank has asked its Facebook fans to vote for their favorite charity or non-profit to receive a donation from them. In addition to the voting, Chase bank also promotes other charities on national holidays such as military related charities during National Military Appreciation Month and the Arbor Day Foundation on Arbor Day.

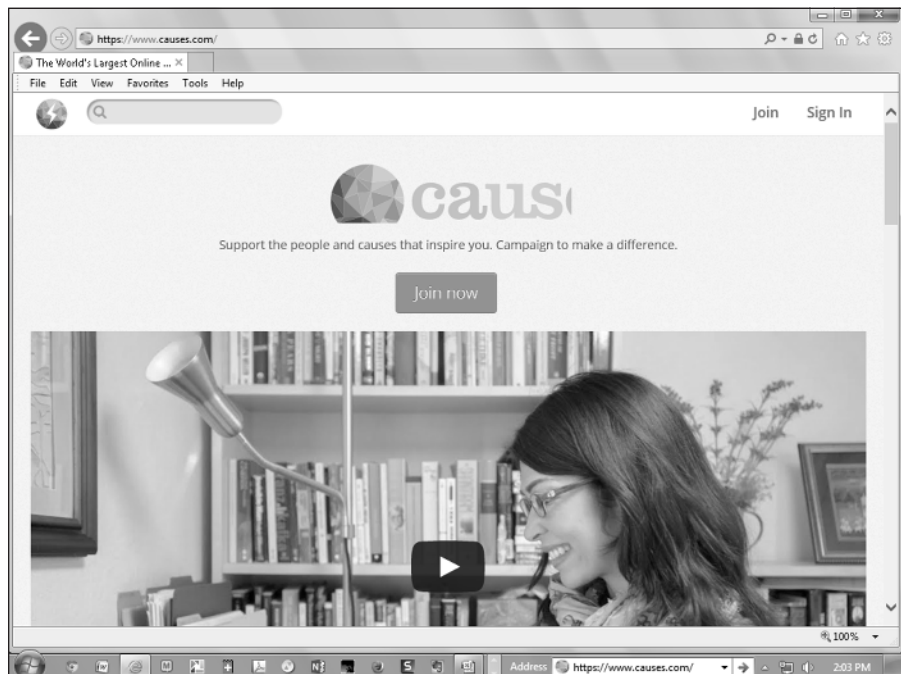


FIGURE 1-8:
Causes.com.