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eMarketing

The essential guide to
digital marketing

4th Edition



Rob Stokes
and the Minds of Quirk

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eMarketing: The essential guide to digital marketing

By Rob Stokes

Compiled by Sarah Blake and Quirk Education

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eMarketing: The essential guide to digital marketing
Fourth Edition

by Rob Stokes

compiled by Sarah Blake and Quirk Education

When we began work on the first edition of “eMarketing” back in 2007, I certainly did not anticipate that we’d be publishing a 4th edition four years later. Witnessing the growth and maturation of the digital marketing industry over the last twelve years has been incredible, but it is the last four years that have demonstrated the most change.

No longer is digital seen as just another channel. I believe that viewing it this way has many dangers. Digital is too pervasive in our lives to be called a mere channel. Television is a channel, but you don’t carry a TV around in your pocket. Digital, and in particular its exploding mobile elements, has been pulled into every facet of our lives. It is as relevant to a developing nation as it is to the ‘first world’, and can have an empowering impact whether you are a business executive or you live in a rural area. The Internet is now everywhere, and for marketers it has become a non-negotiable part of the marketing mix.

Quirk has also evolved tremendously during this time. We have expanded to over 150 people and our clients have grown to include some of the most valuable brands in the world. In turn, the structure of our agency has changed to meet the needs of our clients within this digital landscape. Traditionally, our business was made up of tactical teams: search engine optimisation (SEO), pay per click (PPC), creative, engineering, email marketing, etc. At one point we had about 15 different teams within the organisation. Over time, this structure became less effective than we would have liked. Even with fantastic communication within the business, having so many separate teams meant we were siloed. It became increasingly obvious that the various elements of digital marketing work hand in hand, not just benefiting each other through coordination, but actually relying on each other for success.

A year ago we began a transformation. We took a step back and analysed the digital landscape and what it meant to our clients and their customers. The result of this analysis was a restructuring of our various tactical teams into four key disciplines: **Think**, **Create**, **Engage** and **Optimise**.

The Think team is responsible for research, insight and strategy. They in turn work closely with the Create team whose job it is to build beautiful and functional digital assets. Our Create team is made up of designers, copywriters, video experts, front-end developers and engineers.

But a digital asset in isolation is like the proverbial billboard in the Sahara – invisible. This is where our Engage team comes in. Their job is to drive traffic and build customer relationships. Within Engage resides Search Engine Marketing, Social Media, Display Media, Viral Marketing, Email Marketing and CRM. It is particularly within Engage that you see the importance of teams working together. Social media benefits SEO which benefits PPC which in turn can help build that important database of email subscribers. A basic example,

but I think you get the point. If these eMarketing tactics are being used in isolation, you will lose out on a lot of value.

Finally our Optimise team straddles everything we do at Quirk. One of our philosophies is “Enough is never Enough”: the relentless pursuit of the perfection that you know does not exist. The Optimise team focuses on analytics, conversion optimisation and user experience testing to make sure everything we do for our clients is more effective every day. The most wondrous thing about the Internet is its measurability, and our Optimise team relishes in this opportunity.

We have seen this structure and behaviour become increasingly effective within our agency and for our clients. It was only natural to extend it to the structure of our textbook.

Another evolution at Quirk, since the publication of our previous book, has been the growth of our education business. The QuirkStars have been lecturing at universities and teaching at other companies for years, but on a very ad hoc basis. Suddenly, with the launch of our textbook, this area of our business was in huge demand and as such Quirk Education was born.

We still do a lot of face-to-face teaching, but the fastest growing component of our educational business has been in our online learning offerings. We now offer a full certificate course in eMarketing as well as short courses in social media, WebPR, mobile marketing, SEO, ORM, email marketing and writing for digital. Over the next year we will expand these to include courses in analytics, UX, strategy, internet law and more. It’s an exciting time for us as we are quite obsessed with education and it is very fulfilling to be able to create a business out of it.

Of course, whilst our facilitated online training is charged for, our textbook will always be available for free online. It’s our contribution to the industry that we have gained so much from.

It’s important to raise a glass to those who made this textbook possible. If it takes a village to raise a child, in our case it takes an entire agency to write a textbook. It’s really difficult to single out individuals as everyone played a small part in one way or another.

However special mention must of course go to the lovely Sarah Blake without whom this book would never have happened. She is a genuine digital polymath and her brain and superb writing skill has ensured that this book has the depth and breadth that make it the text of choice for over 400 academic institutions across the world. The Quirk Education team also deserves much credit, but in particular their mighty leaders Kat Scholtz and Lyndi Lawson who did a huge

amount of work, not only with the content, but all the other elements which are essential to bringing a book to fruition. Thanks go again to Solveig Bosch for her efforts in laying out the book and making it look great and also to Roger Ewing who designed the cover based on Craig Raw's original idea.

I'm terribly proud of this book. As I said with the previous edition, it has been much harder than we thought to put it together with many late nights and missed deadlines, but every minute has been worth it.

I must thank my team for helping me make this idea a reality. This book is a distillation of Quirk's knowledge and to be able to offer it to all without boundaries and limitations is a privilege. I can only hope that others do the same across all disciplines. I believe education is the one thing that can change the world. It's up to those with knowledge to do what they can to put it in the hands of others.

Please enjoy and share our book.

Rob Stokes

Some thoughts on Marketing from Seth Godin.

I don't think you'll learn much from this textbook.

It's nothing specific--I actually don't think you can learn how to market from any textbook. As marketing textbooks go, this is a very good one, but still, it's not going to work.

It's not going to work because marketing is about nuance, experience, experimentation and passion. And I don't have a clue how you could start from scratch and learn that from a textbook, no matter how good.

So, what to do?

The first thing you should do is obsess about the terms in this book. Vocabulary is the first step to understanding, and if you don't know what something means, figure it out. Don't turn the page until you do.

Second, get out of the book. Go online. Go market.

There are very few endeavors that are as open to newcomers, as cheap and as easy to play with. You can't learn marketing without doing marketing. Go find a charity or a cause or a business you believe in and start marketing. Build pages. Run ads. Write a blog. Engage. Experiment.

If you don't learn marketing from this process (the book for vocabulary, the web for practicing) then you have no one to blame but yourself. You've already made the first step, don't blow it now. We need you. Market what matters.

Seth Godin

Author

Purple Cow, Permission Marketing and Linchpin

reviews for eMarketing: the essential guide to digital marketing

Writing a book on any aspect of the online world is problematic because it changes so much, which is why the people working with this daily enjoy it so much. There are many books explaining why the internet is important and why you need to be part of the hype - this is not one of those books.

What the team from Quirk have been able to do is create a solid book on eMarketing that will be useful for a long time, regardless of the continuous changes in this field. This eMarketing textbook addresses the core principles one needs to understand to use marketing principles effectively in the online space in a highly accessible format.

If you are a marketer, this is a must have book; if you know a marketer, do him or her a favour and get it for them; if you are just interested in eMarketing and want to expand your general business knowledge, buy two copies - someone will want to borrow this from you.

Jaco Meiring, Digital - Investec

"The text book is not only a great resource but has been fundamental to increasing the profile and education around Digital Marketing within SA. The industry as a whole should be grateful for the impact it has made"

Sean Hidden, Digital Media Manager, Distell.

Reviews for Previous Editions

“Quirk’s eMarketing handbook covers all the most important concepts which are necessary for eMarketing excellence today. I would highly recommend it as both a study guide and a practitioner’s reference manual. Congratulations to the QuirkStars on all the thought, research and work that has obviously gone into this.”

Dave Duarte, founder and director of Nomadic Marketing, UCT Graduate School of Business

“WOW! It is an inspiration to see such a well written and truly essential guide to online marketing being written by South Africans! *eMarketing: The Essential Guide to Online Marketing* should be read and referenced by every smart marketer who is dealing with the complicated world of eMarketing.”

Bronwen Auret, Formerly: Online Marketing Specialist, South African Tourism

“The perfect starting point for anyone entering the world of online marketing.... truly impressive.”

Stafford Masie, Formerly: Country Manager, Google South Africa

“I’ve known Quirk for many years and it’s very exciting to see all their experience distilled into this textbook. Furthermore, their contribution to Open Education by licensing this book under Creative Commons is an initiative I strongly support. Read this book.”

Scott Gray, Formerly: Interactive Marketing, BMW South Africa

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration is the product of a meeting in Cape Town of a coalition of educators, foundations, and Internet pioneers in September 2007. The meeting was organised by the Open Society Institute and the Shuttleworth Foundation. Linux entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth said, "Open sourcing education doesn't just make learning more accessible, it makes it more collaborative, flexible and locally relevant." The Declaration's principles of openness in education and the sharing of knowledge resonate strongly with us.

To show our commitment to the Open Education Declaration, all of the contents of this textbook are freely available online, as are supporting materials for lecturers and for students. We know how quickly things change when it comes to the Internet, so we are committed to regular updates of this resource. A free download of the textbook and further materials and resources are available at www.quirk.biz/emarketingtextbook.

For more information on the Open Education Declaration, and to add your name to the list of individuals committed to this cause, you can go to www.capetowndeclaration.org.

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We brought out the first edition of *eMarketing* in 2008, and now just three years later we are already on the fourth edition. We've had great feedback from students and professionals from around the world, and so in updating the book for the fourth edition, we wanted to incorporate that feedback, as well as update what needed updating in this fast paced digital world we market in.

We've decided to restructure the book a little. While anyone can dip in and out of chapters as needed, we've structured the book the way we work at Quirk:

- **We Think:** we research, plan and strategise for any campaign, big or small.
- **We Create:** we build digital assets for those campaigns.
- **We Engage:** we drive traffic to those assets and build relationships using a variety of online channels.
- **We Optimise:** every step of the way, we use data and analysis to make our assets and relationships work better.

So, this book's chapters are structured under **Think, Create, Engage** and **Optimise**. Follow them sequentially, and you will get an overview of how everything fits together. However, each chapter stands alone as well, so you can brush up certain areas as you need to.

Within each chapter there are notes along the way which often point you in the direction further material, and at the end of each chapter there are links to some great blogs or other books relevant to the chapter. If you want to keep up to date, these blogs are a great way to start.

When you've finished reading, the next most important step is to start doing! Put what you have learned into action. Throughout the book we have listed low-to- no- cost- ways to get started – all that's needed is your brain and some time. There are many vouchers in the print edition of the textbook, so you can get started with practical application. If it's not relevant for your own business, help out someone else.

Good luck and have fun!

**Wishing eMarketing success,
From the QuirkStars**

What's inside: In this chapter we look at some background information for **understanding** how **the Internet** makes digital marketing possible. We also examine **a brief history** of the Internet as well as a description of how it works and **what role it plays** in people's lives.

Introduction to the Internet

There is no doubt about it : the Internet has changed the world we live in. Never before has it been so easy to access information, communicate with people all over the globe and share articles, videos, photos and all manner of media.

The Internet has led to an increasingly connected communications environment, and the growth of Internet usage has resulted in declining distribution of traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Marketing in this interconnected environment and using that connectivity to market is digital marketing.

Digital marketing embraces a wide range of strategies, but what underpins its success is a user-centric and cohesive approach to these strategies.

While the Internet and the World Wide Web have enabled what is sometimes referred to as New Media, the theories that led to the development of the Internet were being developed from the 1950s.

Over the past two decades, marketers began waking up to the power of the Internet, both as a platform for communication and as a way of tracking conversations.

By its very nature, the Internet is a network of interlinking nodes. We as marketers use these nodes to track conversations, and therefore patterns.

A Brief Timeline of Internet Developments

1958	US ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) established to lead science and military technological developments.
1961	MIT research paper of Packet Switching Theory.
1961-69	Ongoing research into inter-computer communications and networks.
1969	ARPANET, commissioned by US Defense Department, goes live.
	US universities connect up network facilities for the first time.
1971	Ray Tomlinson creates first network email application.
1973	Development of protocols to enable multi-network Internet opportunities.
	First international ARPANET connections made.
1976	HM Queen Elizabeth II sends an email.
1978	First spam email is recorded.
1980	Tim Berners-Lee develops rules for the World Wide Web and is credited as the Web Father.
	Alan Emtage develops the first search tool known as 'ARCHIE'.

1982	Standard network protocols are established: Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP), commonly referred to as TCP/IP.
1984	Joint Academic Network (JANET) is established, linking higher education institutions. Domain Name System (DNS) is introduced.
1985	A company named Symbolics becomes the first registered dot.com domain.
1987	National Science Foundation (US) is the catalyst for the surge in funded work into the Internet. Number of Internet hosts increases significantly in this period.
1988-90	28 countries sign up to hook up to the NSFNET, reinforcing international Internet potential.
1990	Senator Al Gore coins the term 'information superhighway'.
1991	Web Father, Tim Berners-Lee releases World Wide Web (www) with scientists from CERN.
1992	America Online (AOL) is launched and raises \$23m in floatation. The term 'surfing the net' is introduced by Jean Armour Polly. The World Bank goes online.
1993	Mainstream media attention increases awareness of the Internet. First Internet publication. <i>Wired</i> , goes on sale. Mosaic introduces the first web browser with graphical interface and is the forerunner of Netscape Navigator. First online shopping malls and virtual banks emerge as does evidence of spam. First clickable banner advert is sold by Global Network Navigator to a law firm.
1995	Amazon is launched by Jeff Bezos. Trial dial-up systems such as AOL and CompuServe launch. Charging is introduced for domain names. Search technology companies such as Alta Vista, Infoseek, Excite and Metacrawler rapidly appear.
1996	Yahoo! is launched on the stock exchange and shares are up nearly 300% on first day.
1997	MP3.com is founded. The term "search engine optimisation" is used for the first time in a forum.
1998	XML is released to enable compatibility between different computer systems. Google founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin.
1999	Peter Merholz coins the word "blog".
2000	AOL and Time-Warner announce they are merging. Pay per Click campaigns are introduced for top ten search rankings. Google AdWords launches, charging for adverts on a CPM basis.

2002	UK online monthly consumer shopping breaks through the £1 billion barrier. Google AdWords charges on a PPC basis instead of CPM.
2003	eBay topples Amazon as the most visited UK website.
2004	CD-WOW loses court case and rights to source cheaper CDs outside EU, undermining the global concept of the Internet. Facebook launches from the Harvard dorm room of Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes and Eduardo Saverin.
2005	Iceland leads the world with broadband penetration: 26.7 inhabitants per 100 have broadband compared with 15.9 per 100 in the UK. Launch of YouTube. Google buys Android Inc.
2006	Google buys YouTube for \$1.6 billion. Facebook membership opens to anyone. Twitter launches. Technorati notes that a blog is created every second of every day. <i>Time Magazine</i> names "You" as person of the year, due to online activity.
2007	Facebook launches Facebook Ads. Apple launches the iPhone. Google Phone, with the Android operating system, launches.
2008	Firefox 3.0 launches with over 8 million downloads in 24 hours. Groupon launches, to become the fastest growing company of all time. Google Chrome, a browser, launches. Apple launches the App Store.
2009	Facebook adds "like" feature. Foursquare launches.
2010	Facebook reaches 500 million users. 24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute. Launch of Google Instant. Google launches Nexus One. Internet usage tops 1 966 514 816 worldwide.
2011	200 million tweets are sent daily on Twitter - about one billion a week. Social media is credited with a crucial role in political movements in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. Apple's App Store downloads top 10 billion. Google + launches.

While the Internet was developed in order for academic and military institutions to share data, it has become a sharing tool for anyone with an Internet connection the world over.

how it works

In its simplest form, the Internet is a collection of connected documents or objects. Hyperlinks are what connect these documents.

A hyperlink is a virtual link from one document on the World Wide Web to another. It includes the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the linked-to document which describes where on the Internet a document is. It is what you enter in the address bar of the browser, because it is the address of that document on the Internet.

A URL provides information to both browsers and people. URLs include domain names which translate to Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. Every website corresponds to an IP address, which is a structured series of dots and numbers indicating where it is physically located. In fact, every device on the network has an IP address.

When you enter a URL into the address bar of a browser, the Domain Name System (DNS) record indicates where the document is that you are linking to.

Confused? Look at the domain name and IP address for Quirk's website:

Domain name:	www.quirk.biz
IP address:	212.100.243.204

A domain name looks something like this: www.domainname.com

But a lot more information can be included in this. URLs can carry the following information: subdomain.domain.tld/directory

- **Domain** - the registered domain name of the website.
- **Subdomain** - a domain that is part of a larger domain.
- **TLD** - the top level domain, uppermost in the hierarchy of domain names.
- **Directory** - a folder to organise content.

The **TLD** can indicate the country in which a domain is registered, and can also give information about the nature of the domain.

- **.com** - is the most common TLD.
- **.co.za, .co.uk, .com.au** - these TLDs give country information.
- **.org** - used by non-profit organisations.
- **.gov** - used by governments.
- **.ac** - used by academic institutions.

note

The Internet is a world wide network which allows for information to be shared between users (also known as nodes). The World Wide Web is a sub-set of this which caters specifically for websites.

note

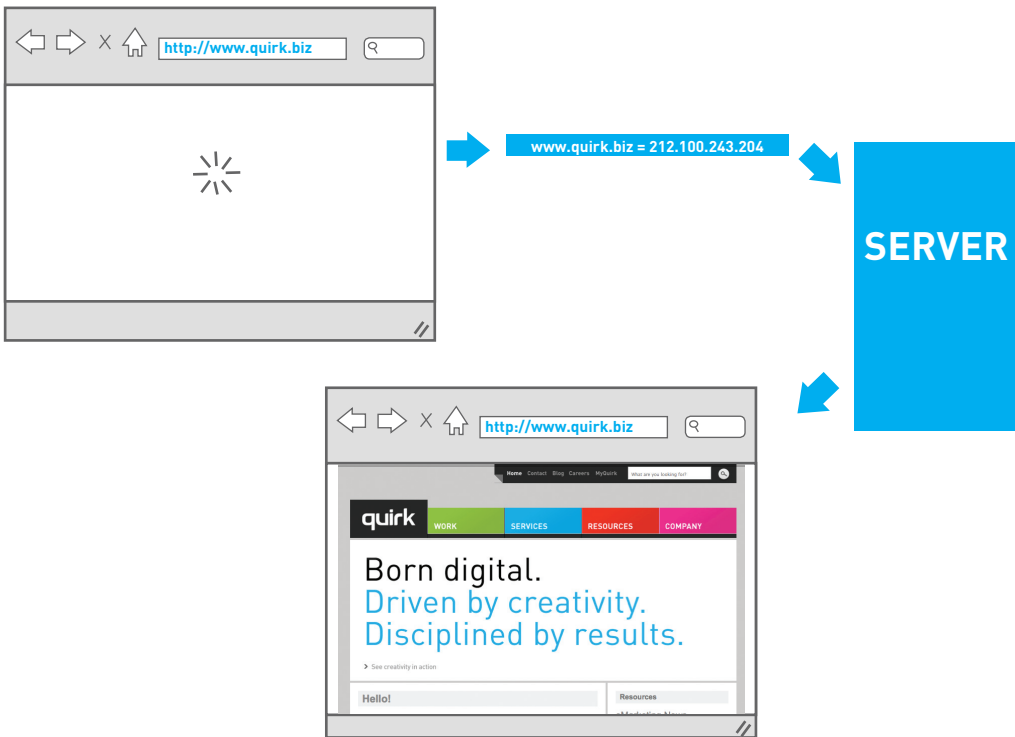
New IP addresses are running out in the current IPv4 version, and so IPv6 is in the process of being deployed.

Domain names must be registered and there is a fee for doing so.

A website, or any content on the Internet, is **hosted** on a **server**. A web server is a machine that serves web content, and the term often refers to the software (applications) and the hardware (machine), that serve the content.

Very simplistically, it works a little something like this:

- Someone enters a URL in a browser.
- This is translated to an IP address, which indicates where the content is located, or where the server for the content is.
- The server then returns the content requested.
- And the person sees the website that she requested.



Sometimes, the server is not able to fulfil the request (i.e. not return the content requested), and instead returns a status code which can then be interpreted. Some common status codes you will encounter in this book include the below.

301: this is used to indicate that the content requested has moved permanently, and the new version of the content is returned instead. These 301 redirects are often used in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) or when a new website is launched to make sure that old links are redirected to the correct, new content.

404: this is returned when the content was not found on the server, either because there was an error in the link, or because the content has been moved or deleted. Website owners can design a custom page for when a 404 error occurs, giving users useful information.

You can find a full list of status codes at www.w3.org/Protocols/rfc2616/rfc2616-sec10.html.

This information can be sent via Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), or **HTTPS**, which is a combination of HTTP with a secure way of transmitting information. HTTP makes it easy to request and transfer information. It's what makes our websites load, and allows us to connect with people on social networks. However, the information that is transferred is not transferred securely, meaning that it could be viewed by third parties. If this was the only way of sending information online, it would be a bad idea to bank online, or to purchase anything over the Internet. This is why we use HTTPS to encrypt information when it is sensitive. In order to make use of HTTPS, the relevant website needs to get a secure certificate, which ensures that various details have been verified by a trusted third party.

If you're unsure, look in the browser address bar to check whether the site you are on is HTTP or HTTPS. Most browsers will indicate a secure site with a little padlock in the address bar, or somewhere else in the browser, to make sure that you know you are in a secure site.

How Do People Access the Internet?

People connect to the Internet and access content in many different ways. When it comes to the physical connection to the Internet, the market presents a number of options:

- [Dial-up](#)
- [3G connections](#)
- [WiFi and WiMax](#)
- [Broadband](#)
- [ADSL](#)

The list goes on. The devices people use vary from mobile phones and handheld small devices to personal notebooks and desktop computers. The environment that people are in when they access the Internet also differs:

- [At home](#)
- [At the office or place of work](#)
- [Libraries and education centres](#)
- [Internet cafes and coffee shops](#)

note

404 pages can be very creative, and you can often find collections of amusing 404 pages on web design blogs. View some creative examples at www.webdesignledger.com/inspiration/35-creative-404-error-pages.

Not only do these environmental factors affect how people use the Internet, but their reasons for using the Internet also have an effect on how they interact online.

For some people, it is primarily a communications channel, and their online activity is focused on their email inbox, while for others it may be a research channel, with search engines playing a large role in their online experience.

Having such a diverse audience means that there are many channels available to marketers when it comes to digital marketing.

What Does This All Have To Do With Marketing?

Marketing is about conversations, and the Internet has become a hub of conversations. The connected nature of the Internet allows us to follow and track these conversations, and provides entry points for all parties. What follows in this book are ways of conversing with existing and potential customers using the Internet.

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further reading

Tim Berners-Lee's *Answers for Young People* is a brief outline of how he invented the World Wide Web:

www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/Kids

His book *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web* covers this in far more depth.

think

Introduction to Think

It seems too obvious to mention, but the foundation of consistently successful marketing communications lies in thorough planning and preparation for a strategic solution. Before you execute digital campaigns, you need to plan them. You need to research and understand your product, your communication challenge, your market, your competitors and of course your consumers. We call planning, strategy and research **Think**.

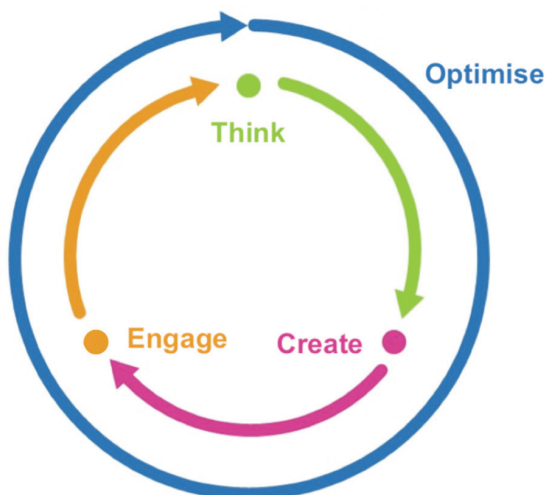
Think is the first step in a strategic process:

Think: research, plan and strategise. Use the opportunities of digital to meet communications, market and product challenges. Plan assets and campaigns.

Create: build beautiful assets, from websites and videos, to banner adverts and applications.

Engage: use channels to drive traffic to those assets and build relationships with customers.

Optimise: track and analyse to understand how assets and campaigns are performing. Derive insight to improve and test assets and campaigns.



The next three chapters are devoted to Think.

Strategy tackles how the Internet has changed and challenged the world we market in, and how best to use digital means for marketing strategies.

Market Research unpacks how to use the Internet for research. The Internet was originally developed as an academic tool, allowing for papers and research to be shared very easily. This is ideal for savvy marketers. Its importance as a platform for assisting user research is only just beginning to be exploited, and this chapter addresses some considerations for online market research.

The Internet has allowed for a greater collaboration and sharing of ideas, and this has seen remarkable innovation in collaborative approaches to problem solving. This phenomenon is known as crowdsourcing, and the **Crowdsourcing** chapter approaches this as a strategic marketing solution.

What's inside: An introduction to the **Internet and the Marketing Mix**, some **key terms and** concepts around strategy and a guide to **developing a marketing plan**. We look at the correlation between **digital marketing and marketing**, using **online tools for gathering market intelligence** and a **digital marketing strategy in action**.

1.1 introduction

A strategy will dictate the most advantageous direction for an organisation to take over a defined period of time. It will also indicate which tactics and means should be used to execute this direction. Originating as a military term, strategy is about using your strengths, as well as the context in which you are operating, to your advantage.

In marketing, strategy starts on the outside, considering the needs and expectations of the consumer and moving inwards to the crux of the brand's identity, to see where the business can gain advantage and add value.

1.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Application programming interface (API)	A particular set of rules and specifications that software programs can abide by when communicating with each other. It serves as an interface between different software programs and facilitates their communication, similar to the way a user interface facilitates communication between humans and computers. APIs are often used by third-party developers to create applications for social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook.
Cluetrain Manifesto	A set of 95 theses organised as a Call to Action for businesses operating within a newly connected market place.
eMarketing	The process of marketing a brand using digital channels.
Market share	Market share, in strategic management and marketing, is the percentage or proportion of the total available market or market segment that is being serviced by a company.
Metric	A unit of measurement.
Online Reputation Management (ORM)	The understanding and influencing of the perception of an entity online. This entails ensuring that you know what is being said about you, and that you are leading the conversation.
Pay per click (PPC)	Pay per click is advertising on search engines where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.
Return on investment (ROI)	The ratio of cost to profit.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS)	RSS allows you to receive/ syndicate this information without requiring you to constantly open new pages in your browser. Also known as a feedreader.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	SEO is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking for specific keywords in the search engines.
Short Message Service (SMS)	Electronic messages sent on a wireless network.
Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP)	A simple XML-based protocol to allow for the exchanging of structured information over HTTP.
Strategy	A set of ideas that outline how a product line or brand will achieve its objectives. This guides decisions on how to create, distribute, promote and price the product or service.
Tactic	A specific action or method that contributes to achieving a goal.
WebPR	Public relations on the web. Online news releases and article syndication promote brands as well as drive traffic to sites.
eXtensible Markup Language (XML)	A standard used for creating structured documents.

1.3 what is marketing?

A simple, old-school definition for marketing is that it is the creation of demand for your product or service. If all goes well, this demand should translate into sales and, ultimately, revenue.

In order to drive people to pay more for your product or service, or to consider you superior to your competitors, you need to create meaningful benefits for the consumer. The value that a marketer should seek to create should be equal to or even greater than the cost of the product to the consumer. Doing this often enough will result in the creation of trust in and loyalty towards the brand.

1.4 what is digital marketing?

If marketing creates demand, digital marketing drives the creation of demand using the power of the Internet. The Internet is an interactive medium. It allows for the exchange of currency, but more than that, it allows for the exchange of value.

A business on the Internet can gain value in the form of time, attention and advocacy from the consumer. For the user, value can be added in the form of

entertainment and utility. The reciprocity of the transaction is what's important here – in other words, the exchange is a two-way street that provides benefit to both parties simultaneously.

The Internet has changed the world in which we sell. It reaches beyond being a new channel for marketing and offers a new paradigm for the way consumers connect with brands and with each other. The online medium provides consumers with more choice, more influence and more power. Brands have new ways of selling, new products and services to sell as well as new markets in which to sell. The roles played by marketing agencies are shifting too. Traditional agencies are getting better at digital marketing, while agencies that started out as digital shops are starting to play in the above-the-line space. More than ever, integrated strategies that speak to an overall brand identity are vital to achieving an organisation's goals.

However, marketing on the Internet does not necessarily mean throwing out the rule book on marketing and business foundations and principles. Instead, the Internet provides a new environment in which to build on these principles. Profit is still revenue less cost. The Internet does not change that.

Brands build loyalty through users who love their products or services. Users fall in love with products and services when their experience is tailored to their needs, as opposed to serving the brand. More than any other type of marketing, digital marketing is measurable. This gives brands the opportunity to build tailored, optimised brand experiences for consumers.

1.5 what is digital marketing strategy?

Digital marketing strategy builds on and adapts the principles of traditional marketing, using the opportunities and challenges offered by technology and the digital medium.

User-centric thinking, which involves placing the user at the core of all decisions, is vital when looking at building a successful digital marketing strategy. The advent of new technologies means the digital marketing strategist of today is offered not only a plethora of new tactical possibilities, but also unprecedented ways of measuring the effectiveness of chosen strategies and tactics.

The fact that digital marketing is highly empirical is one of its key strengths. Everything can be measured: from behaviours, to actions and action paths, to results. This means that the digital marketing strategist should start thinking with return on investment (ROI) in mind. Built into any strategy should be a testing framework and the ability to remain flexible and dynamic in a medium that shifts and changes as user behaviours do.

If we define strategy as “a plan of action designed to achieve a particular outcome”, then the desired outcome from a digital marketing strategy point of view would be aligned with your organisation’s overall business objectives. For example, if one of the overall business objectives is acquisition of new clients, possible digital marketing objectives might be building brand awareness online.

A tactic differs from a strategy. It is a specific action or method that contributes to achieving a goal. For example, if the overall business objective is acquisition and the digital objective is to increase awareness, a paid search campaign would be a possible tactic towards achieving this.

1.6 the internet in the traditional marketing mix

Hundreds of books have been written on the theory of strategy and different tools and models strategists use to craft better plans. Sun Tzu, a famous warrior (and military strategist), wrote *The Art of War* in the 6th century BC, and copies are still selling by the thousand on Amazon.com.

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Figure 1.1 *The Art of War*, written in the 6th century BC, is still an important reference for the importance of strategy development.

There are various elements that need to be evaluated when developing a strategy. These elements are also likely to change over time, again highlighting the importance of being dynamic and agile in terms of strategic adjustments.

note

A value proposition is the unique benefit that your business offers to its customers.

An effective strategy involves making choices, as the brand that attempts to be all things to all people risks becoming unfocused or losing the clarity of its value proposition. To make a strong choice, a strategist must first examine what the choices are: what are the factors that affect your business? These include market, competitor landscape, customers and core competencies.

For example, a new airline, before launching, would need to consider whether their product is a domestic or international service; whether its market would be budget travellers or international and business travellers; and whether their channel would be through primary airports or smaller, more cost-effective airports. Each of these choices will result in a vastly different strategic direction.

In order to assist strategists in the formulation of business strategies, models such as The Four Ps (product, price, placement and promotion) and the Porter Five Forces analysis have become widely adopted – both of these tools assist in evaluating the kind of value the business is offering and the competitiveness of the market. The Internet, however, impacts hugely on both of these aspects, prompting us to re-examine and adapt traditional models to the changing market environment and new consumer behaviours.

The Four Ps

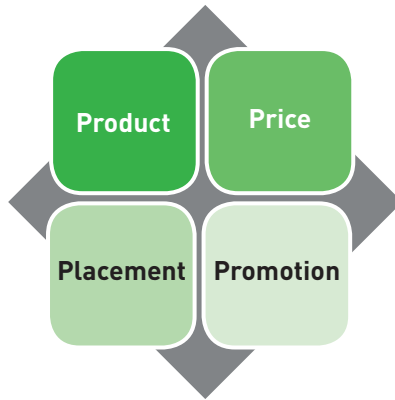


Figure 1.2 The Four Ps

The Four Ps are fundamentally changed by the Internet and need to be looked at in view of the context offered by digitally connected media and from the perspective of the consumer.

1. Products and Services

Products and services are what a company sells. From fast moving consumer goods to digital products such as software, to services such as consultancy, the Internet has allowed for a huge range of new products.

Technology allows for mass customisation of products, seen in a growing trend of letting customers customise goods online before they are created. For

example, NIKEiD (<http://nikeid.nike.com>) and Converse (www.converse.com) both allow customers to create their own trainers based on a number of preset options that will then be manufactured to the customer requirements. In a similar fashion, computer products can be built to specifications, as the costs of offering this type of service to customers is reduced by the Internet.

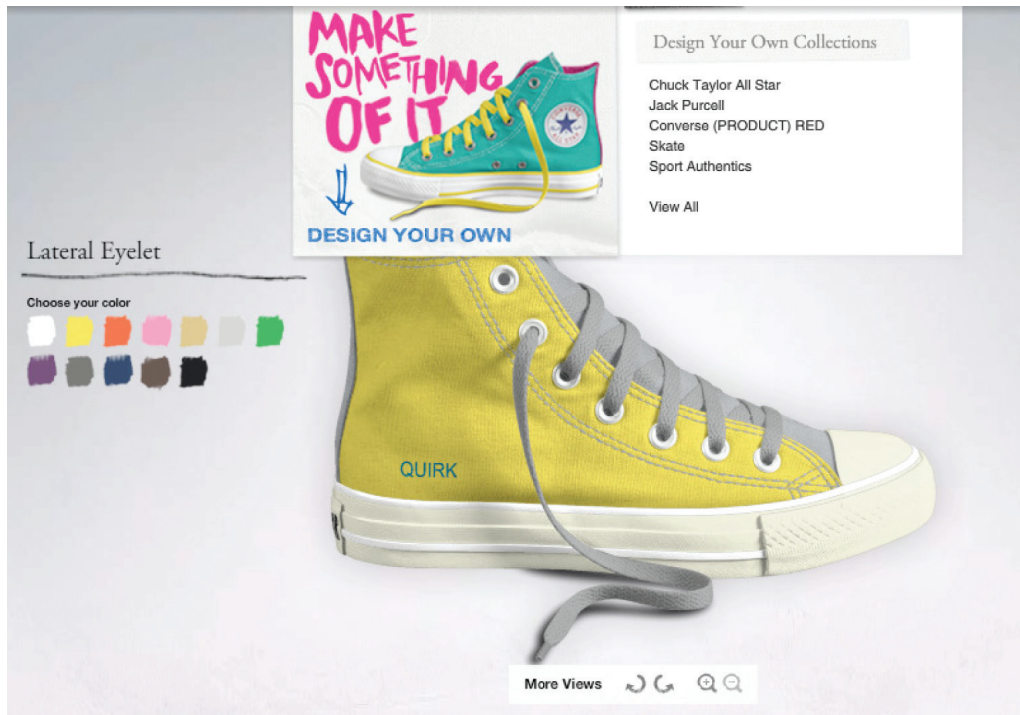


Figure 1.3 Converse.com allows for the personalisation of products. This involves customers and gives them a sense of ownership.

Digital products can exist because of the Internet. The very framework of the Internet allows for products such as software and digital music to be distributed. The Internet as a distribution medium is what makes these products possible.

2. Price

With customers able to access pricing information from a number of suppliers with relative ease, the Internet is growing a market of near perfect competition (Porter, 2001). The prevalence of search engines and of shopping comparison websites, such as www.pricerunner.co.uk and www.nextag.com, make it easy for customers to compare product prices across a number of retailers. The opportunity for companies to differentiate themselves on price has led to decreased prices for many commodities, from the regularly reduced pricing of books on Amazon.com to ticket prices on low cost airlines such as EasyJet (www.easyjet.com) in Europe.

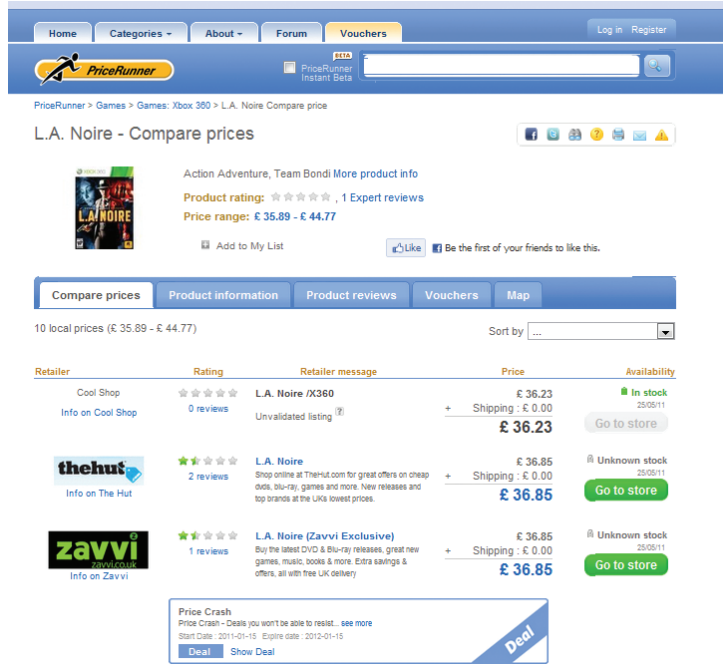


Figure 1.4 Websites such as PriceRunner allow for the comparing of prices.

With price differentiation, especially for smaller players in the market, becoming a challenge, businesses need to consider differentiating on value. Value is a combination of service and price, where a customer might be willing to pay a higher price for a better experience.

3. Placement or Distribution

Particularly for digital products and services, the Internet gives companies access to a global marketplace. Product distribution and markets no longer have to be dictated by location. With efficient delivery and shipping channels, products that are not digital can also benefit from a far wider market place. The Internet allows the basic foundations of mail order businesses to flourish online with a catalogue that is cheaper to produce and update and cheaper to distribute - a website. In the travel industry, travel agents stopped issuing paper tickets as of 31 May 2008 (Iata 2008). Nearly all aeroplane tickets are now e-tickets.

Technology such as APIs, SOAP services, RSS and XML allow information and services to be distributed throughout the world. For example, the API for a hotel reservations database, Starfish Luxury Travel Distribution (www.starfishinteractive.com), allows a diverse range of websites to offer instant online bookings for hotels in the inventory. Partners with booking engines include www.spaworld.tv and www.mrandmrsmith.com.

This is both a huge opportunity and a huge challenge for businesses. On the

one hand, it can allow niche products and markets to flourish in a global space. On the other hand, it can be tempting for a marketer to try to reach too many markets at once. A global marketplace is also not yet fully supported by national banking and tax legislation across the world.

4. Promotion

The Internet, as an information and entertainment medium, naturally lends itself to being used to promote products. The online promotional mix is an extension of the offline, but with some significant differences. Online promotion can be tracked, measured and targeted in a far more sophisticated way. Advertising, personal sales, promotions based marketing and public relations can all be conducted through the online medium. These tactics and applications are developed further, later-on in this textbook.

5. A New P: People

In addition to the existing Four Ps, the Internet prompts the consideration of a new P: **People**. This final element speaks to examining the powerful human element that the digitally connected world permits: personalisation, peer-to-peer sharing, communities and consumer-centric organisations which allow people to participate in the brand story.

Porter Five Forces Analysis

The Porter Five Forces analysis is another business tool that needs to be adapted for an online perspective. This model assists in determining the competitive intensity and therefore the attractiveness of a market. The Internet's low barrier to entry has allowed the proliferation of businesses in the online space, as well as providing infinite choices for customers in terms of products and services, making it important to consider new factors when devising a marketing strategy.

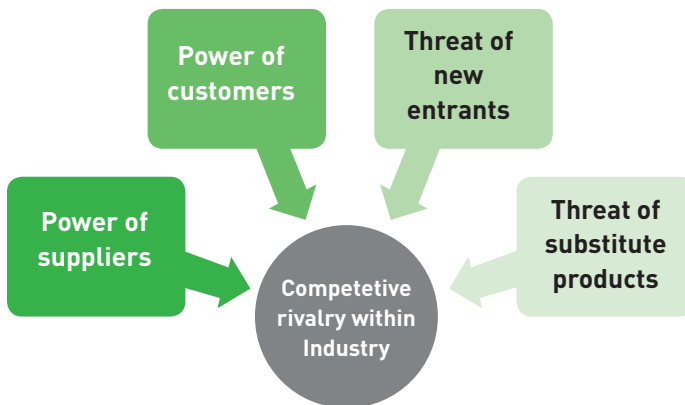


Figure 1.5 Porter's Five Forces. The Internet has allowed for an incredibly competitive market place.

note

An API is an Application Programming Interface. Essentially, an API gives instructions and rules for communicating with another programme or database. This allows, for example, different companies and developers to build different front-end systems that all communicate with the same database.

World-renowned marketer and bestselling author on the subject of business and marketing, Seth Godin, recommends five elements for consideration:

Data: The raw facts about your product or service. Online advertisers use data to understand which copy on their pay per click (PPC) advertising is converting the highest number of customers and grocery stores use purchase habit data to layout their stores (which is why the ready-made sandwiches and cool drinks are nearly always in the furthest corner away from the entrance!). Online, data is richer than ever before.

Stories: The Cluetrain Manifesto describes markets as “conversations”. Humans are intrinsic storytellers; everything we say is some kind of story. Brands create stories, myths and legends around their products and services. Ultimately, what people say about your product or service is a story and now, more than ever, consumers are helping to craft the stories that define organisations.

Products: Products are physical manifestations of your story. If your story is that your products are simpler, faster and better, your products need to deliver on that promise, or your story will be dismissed as untrue.

Interactions: Interactions are the tactics used to connect with the consumer and comprise any touchpoints of the brand: from television advertising, to email, SMS and the way your point of sale staff greet customers. There are many opportunities to interact with consumers, most of them cost-effective; making this point a potential hero of Godin’s marketing mix.

Connection: This point speaks to the unofficial “fifth P” of The Four Ps. Connection is the nirvana of marketing strategy. It is the point where successful application of the first four elements results in people falling in love with your brand. Once an organisation has effectively connected with its customers, the real magic happens - customers connect with each other through their mutual belief in the brand story. Communities of people who want to be part of their stories follow truly great brands. Apple is a good example of a dedicated tribal following. People want their products, want others to see them with Apple products and want the world to know that they have an iPhone or a Macbook Pro. This kind of tribal following spells success for any brand.

1.7 crafting a digital marketing strategy



Figure 1.6 Six steps in crafting a successful digital marketing strategy

Any activity with an end goal (whether it's winning a war, building a city or selling a product) should have a blueprint or map in place for every person in the organisation to follow in the process of achieving it.

A strategy needs to cover the questions of who you are, what you are offering and to whom, as well as why and how you are doing so. The steps and questions below cover what an organisation should be aware of when creating and implementing a strategy that will meet its objectives.

The first step in crafting a successful strategy is to examine the context of the organisation and the various stakeholders.

1. Context:

- Who are you and what is it about your identity that makes you useful?
- Who are your customers and what needs and wants do they have?
- Who are your competitors? These might extend beyond organisations that compete with you on the basis of price and product and could also be competition in the form of abstracts such as time and mindshare.
- What is the context in which you are operating (social, political and economic factors) and how is this likely to change in the future?

A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is an ideal way to understand your business and your market.

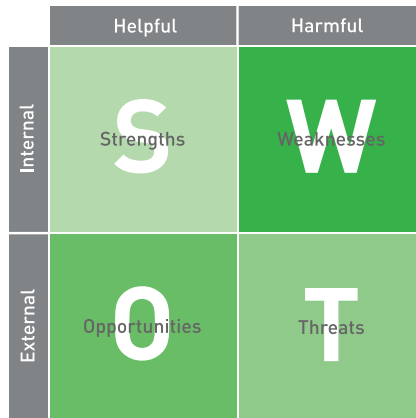


Figure 1.7 SWOT analysis

Once you have examined the market situation, the second step is an examination of your value proposition, in other words, what value your organisation can add to that market.

2. Objectives:

Digital marketing has technology at its heart. It is therefore crucial to involve both technical and aesthetic minds in the initial stages of strategy formulation. The objectives should speak to both system and story and the tools afforded by technology should be a starting point in the process of developing strategic objectives.

The second factor to consider when setting objectives is that all channels of a brand operate as part of a greater whole. Digital marketing objectives should be aligned with the brand’s greater strategic objectives.

3. Value-Exchange:

- What value are you adding to the market, what are you trying to achieve and how will you know if you are successful?

Digital can achieve many things in terms of users and value creation. Once you have defined what constitutes success and have delineated your prime objective, you can examine other goals that support this objective. For example, if your prime objective is for people to view the full range of products that your organisation has to offer, supporting goals could be “we want people to share their comments to support our range development” or “we want to identify the most enthusiastic users and recruit them as brand ambassadors”. Exploring all the options before defining the most specific and focused direction will result in the most successful direction.

4. Tactics and Evaluation:

A diverse variety of digital tools and tactics are available once you have defined your digital marketing objectives. The strength of the tools is dependent on the type of objectives set for the brand – for example, acquisition (or gaining new customers) may be best driven by paid search, while email is one of the most effective tools for selling more products to existing customers.

The table below expands on some of the most popular tactics available to digital marketers and their possible outcomes. These will be covered in far more detail in the **Engage** section of this book.

Tactic	Outcome
Email Marketing	Customer Retention
Online Advertising	Branding and Acquisition
Affiliate Marketing	Sales and Branding
SEO	Customer Retention and Acquisition
PPC	Customer Retention and Acquisition
Social Media	Branding and Participation
ORM	Customer Retention, Branding and Participation
WebPR	Acquisition and Branding

Figure 1.8 Tactics and their outcomes.

Tactic	Outcome
<p>Email Marketing</p> <p>A form of direct marketing that uses electronic means to deliver commercial messages to an audience. It is extremely cost-effective, highly targeted, customisable on a mass scale and completely measurable – all of which make it one of the most powerful digital marketing tactics.</p>	<p>Email marketing is a tool for building relationships with both potential and existing customers.</p> <p>It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, ultimately leading to greater profitability for the organisation as a whole.</p> <p>A targeted, segmented email database means that a brand can direct messages at certain sectors of their customer base in order to achieve the best results.</p>

<p>Online Advertising</p> <p>Online advertising encompasses advertising in all areas of the Internet - search engine results pages, adverts placed in emails, adverts placed on social networks and adverts on the Google display network.</p>	<p>The main objective of advertising is to increase sales by raising brand awareness online. It can also be more interactive and therefore less disruptive than traditional advertising or non-interactive online advertising, as users can choose to engage with the advert or not. Online advertising can be optimised by targeting it to certain geographies and specific markets and contextualising it.</p>
<p>Affiliate Marketing</p> <p>Affiliate marketing is a system of reward whereby referrers are given a “finder’s fee” for every referral they give.</p>	<p>Online, affiliate marketing is widely used to promote websites, with the referrers being rewarded for every visitor, subscriber or customer provided through their efforts. It is thus a useful tactic for branding and acquisition.</p>
<p>SEO</p> <p>This is the practice of optimising a website in order to rank higher on the search engine results pages. SEO involves working with the parameters set by search engines to ensure that search engines index it when people enter a search term that is relevant for a product or service.</p>	<p>SEO has a key role to play in acquisition, as it ensures your organisation’s offering will appear in the search results, allowing you to reach potential customers. A site that is optimised for the search engines is also a site that is clear, relevant and well designed. These elements ensure a great user experience, meaning that SEO plays a role in retention too.</p>
<p>PPC</p> <p>In a pay per click or PPC system of advertising, the advertiser only pays for each click on their advert. It is most often used for the advertising on search engine results pages; it is also used in banner advertising (where the advertiser pays per click on their banner).</p>	<p>For the advertiser, the beauty of PPC adverts lie in the fact that they are keyword based. This means an advert will come up in response to the search terms entered by the consumer. PPC therefore plays a role in acquisition and retention. It allows the advertiser to reach people who are already in the buying cycle or are expressing interest in what they have to offer.</p>
<p>Social Media</p> <p>Social media, also known as consumer-generated media or Web 2.0 are media (in the form of text, visuals and audio) created to be shared. It has changed the face of marketing by allowing collaboration and connection in a way that no other channel has been able to offer.</p>	<p>From a strategic perspective, social media is useful for branding, raising awareness of the brand story and allowing the consumer to become involved in the story through collaboration. Social media platforms also play a role in building awareness, due to their shareable, viral nature. They can also provide crowdsourced feedback via open graphs and social analytics systems.</p>

<p>ORM</p> <p>Online reputation management (ORM) is the process by which a brand monitors, measures and manages the conversations that are happening around it online.</p>	<p>ORM can have a huge impact on a brand's reputation and its bottom line. It is only through listening to conversations being carried out by its customers and potential customers that an organisation can adequately respond and manage its situation in the market. ORM speaks to acquisition, engagement and participation. An effective ORM tool can assist a company in engaging with its customers where relevant and providing better service by responding to queries and complaints. The insights gained from ORM should be considered when evaluating and optimising strategic direction.</p>
<p>WebPR</p> <p>Public relations are a set of functions that foster an organisation's ability to listen to, appreciate and respond to those people with whom it is exchanging value. While traditional PR focuses on carefully crafted press releases and a controlled release of information, the Internet means that information is freely available to a wider audience, as opposed to a select group of journalists.</p>	<p>WebPR allows companies to engage in a more immediate form of communication. Unlike the traditional press release, WebPR is about connecting with customers.</p> <p>It is used to connect with customers and enhance brand awareness, exposure and SEO efforts.</p>

Once the objectives and tactics have been set, these should be cross-checked and re-evaluated against the needs and resources of your organisation to make sure your strategy is on the right track and no opportunities are being overlooked.

5. Metrics:

Metrics are important in defining what successful value-exchange is worth to an organisation and how this worth will be measured. This step needs to be considered in conjunction with value-exchange. As previously discussed, digital is an empirical medium and digital marketing should start with ROI in mind. Setting up the analysis and measurement tools early on in the online strategising phase will enable you to measure returns from inception. The metrics that matter to your business objectives are referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs).

6. Ongoing Optimisation:

The growing necessity for an organisation to remain dynamic and agile ties in with metrics and should be considered in the early stages of strategy formulation, as well as being a continuous process in refining and optimising tactics.

The user experience and journey is vital to building successful brands. Budget should be set aside upfront to be dedicated to the analysis of user data and the optimisation of conversion paths.

Social thinking and socially informed innovation are also valuable and uniquely suited to the online space. Socially powered insight can be used to inform strategic decisions and execute on various areas of the organisation, from product roadmaps to service plans. Brands are beginning to shift from being present in social media to actively using it, aligning it with actionable objectives and their corresponding metrics. This is critical in demonstrating ROI and the repeated impact of social channels on the bottom line.

Managing the learning loop (the knowledge gained from reviewing the performance of your tactics, which can then be fed back into the strategy) can be difficult. This is because brand cycles often move more slowly than the real-time results you will see online. It is therefore important to find a way to work agility into the strategy, allowing you to be quick and proactive, as opposed to slow and reactive. It may be necessary, for example, to incorporate constant monitoring into any strategy, which will be discussed further in the *Online Reputation Management (ORM)* chapter.

Strong basic principles and the establishment of a set programme or system to experiment, optimise and learn will make effective innovation and the implementation of learnings easier.

It goes without saying that checking the websites and social networking platforms of competitors, as well as utilising the analytics systems that are built into the platforms you are using, are first steps in measuring data. YouTube, Facebook and Flickr are all platforms that offer details on how your users are interacting with your content.

Some further useful tools for gathering market intelligence are detailed in the *Online Reputation Management* chapter. These same tools can prove invaluable for market research, especially when the keywords monitored are chosen to reflect industry trends.

Data Type	Tools
<p>Search data <i>(for both SEO and PPC)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spyfu www.spyfu.com • Quirk SearchStatus www.quirk.biz/searchstatus • SEO Book's Rank Checker www.tools.seobook.com/firefox/rank-checker/

Competitor activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Detection www.changedetection.com • Google Alerts www.google.com/alerts • BrandsEye www.brandseye.com • Google Patent Search www.google.com/patents
Trend and market research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Insights www.google.com/insights/search • Flickr www.flickr.com • Delicious www.delicious.com • Google Adwords External Keywords Tool www.adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal • Google Trends http://www.google.com/trends • YouTube Selection Tool https://ads.youtube.com/keyword_tool

Figure 1.9 Data Collection Tools.

1.8 summary

Strategy is an imperative first step in establishing the positioning of your brand within the market context and providing a roadmap in order for you to achieve your end goals.

There may be many different paths to reach these goals, but an effective strategy weighs the available options and makes a choice, based on the internal and external brand situation. Digital marketing has technology at its heart and understanding the value that technology can add to people's experiences of your brand. The variety of new tools and tactics offered by the digital medium should inform your strategic choices.

Digital marketing strategy is highly empirical and your strategic thinking should start by being mindful of ROI and the ways in which this can be measured. This measurement-focused thinking will allow you to optimise your tactics and performance in order to create the most valuable, deliverable brand story, the most optimised conversion funnels and the highest ROI.

1.9 case study: The Best Job in the World

Tourist destinations have been marketed in a variety of interesting ways. In 2009 Tourism Queensland, an Australian state government agency responsible for marketing the north-eastern part of the continent, promoted the idea of the "Best Job in the World".

This unusual campaign pushed an idea that seemed too good to be true: an opportunity to "housesit the famously beautiful islands of the Great Barrier Reef" for half a year, with a home base on Hamilton Island.

The campaign, developed by the Brisbane-based agency SapientNitro, began with worldwide classified advertising, seeking applicants for an “island caretaker position” with a salary of £73 000.



Figure 1.10 A strategic approach meant utilising a number of tactics.

Source: ourawardentry.com.au

In return, the winner would need to blog about his or her experience, record videos and commit to various PR activities.

Anyone could apply by simply submitting a video application for public consideration.

From a strategic perspective, SapientNitro and Tourism Queensland needed to launch the campaign to experience seekers across eight international markets.

Traffic was initially driven to the website through recruitment via online job sites and small display ads, and supported with scores of mainstream press and blog articles, directing further traffic to islandreefjob.com.

There, the website showcased the various beautiful attractions found on the island, as well as information on sustainability. This platform allowed the brand to push Australia as a tourist destination, both for international travellers and locals.

The interest was overwhelming, with the submission website crashing only two days after the launch of the campaign due to excessive visits and video uploading.

Tourism Queensland and SapientNitro also had a strong presence across social media spaces, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and MySpace. Through these platforms they engaged with interested parties around the world, while applicants and general browsers were able to use these spaces to interact further.

After months of searching, the prize went to “ostrich-riding, bungee-jumping” charity worker Ben Southall from Hampshire, who beat out 35 000 other entries. He had a whale of a time until his last month, when he was stung by an Irukandji jellyfish (O’Loughlin, Pidd 2009). Don’t worry, he made a full recovery!

Besides being lauded as the “greatest PR stunt of all time”, the campaign also returned some impressive figures (Tourism Queensland):

Estimated media coverage of over AUD\$400 million. This included global news coverage from CNN stories, BBC documentaries, Time magazine articles and everything in between.

The campaign reached an audience of approximately three billion people through media coverage.

34 684, one minute video job applications we submitted from 197 countries. It’s safe to say that at least one person from every country in the world applied.

Over 475 000 votes for Wild Card applicants were received.

Web stats showed 8 465 280 unique visits, 55 002 415 page views with an average of 8.25 minutes spent per visit.

Overall, it’s safe to say that the campaign was a success (except for that one little sting) and it even went on to win numerous awards at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival.

case study questions

1. Why do you think this campaign garnered such impressive media coverage?
2. How did Tourism Queensland and SapientNitro approach the challenge of marketing across eight international markets?
3. What role did flexibility play in this campaign?
4. How did the strategy leverage social media as a tool for engagement?

chapter questions

1. Why is it important to consider the context of any marketing activities which you would like to implement?
2. How has the Internet affected marketing and the models we use to understand it?
3. Do you agree with the idea that customers are more empowered than they were before digital communications were so prevalent?

1.10 references

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Ourawardentry.com (date unknown) *Best Job In The World: Execution and use of Media*

<http://www.ourawardentry.com.au/bestjob/execution-of-media.html>

[Accessed 20 July 2011]

further reading

- www.sethgodin.typepad.com - Seth Godin's popular blog provides regular insight and food for thought.
- www.gigaom.com - GigaOM's community of writers covers all things technology.
- www.baekdal.com - Thomas Baekdal's thought pieces provide perspectives and models of how the Internet is changing transactional models.

What's inside: We begin with an **introduction**, and then it's into the **key terms and concepts** of market research, **quantitative and qualitative research**, how to go about **gathering data** and the distinction between **primary** and **secondary research**. Learn about **online research communities**, conducting **research surveys** and get to grips with the valuable **tools of the trade**. Wrap things up with a **chapter summary** and a **case study** showing how BrandsEye has developed with the market's demands.

2.1 introduction

Online research methods can be seen as a subset of market research, but one that is enabling broader, faster and sometimes more detailed forms of information gathering.

While the Internet was developed as a military project, the World Wide Web was developed on the Internet protocol as a tool for academics to allow information to be shared freely. This foundation of the web as an information tool has had profound effects on the markets in which we transact.

Consider this: consumers are able to research companies and products easily, gathering information to compare prices and services with a few clicks of the mouse. Consumers are also able to share likes and dislikes easily, whether that information is shared with companies or with friends.

amazon.co.uk Hello. Sign in to get personalised recommendations. New Customer? Start here. Find the Hottest Summer Offers

Your Amazon.co.uk | Today's Deals | Gift Cards | Gifts & Wish Lists | Your Account | Help

Shop All Departments Search Electronics & Photo Basket Wish List

Electronics Brands Bestsellers Camera & Photo TV & Home Theatre Audio & MP3 Computers & Accessories Sat Nav Phones Sell Your Stuff

Canon EOS 400D Digital SLR Camera (incl. EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 Lens Kit)
by Canon

Price at a Glance
Used: from **£290.00**
Have one to sell? [Sell yours here](#)

Always pay through Amazon.co.uk's Shopping Cart or 1-Click. Learn more about [Safe Online Shopping](#) and our [safe buying guarantees](#).

All New (0) Used (9 from £290.00)

Show All FREE Super Saver Delivery offers only (0) Sorted by Price + Delivery

Used 1-5 of 9 offers

Price + Delivery	Condition	Seller Information	Buying Options
£290.00 + £5.10 delivery	Used - Like New	Seller: guanna_banna Seller Rating: Just Launched (Seller Profile) In stock. Dispatched from United Kingdom. Domestic delivery rates and return policy Extremely good condition camera with no scuffs or marks. Comes with Lowepro camera bag and all original boxing and instructio... Read more	Add to Basket or Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering.
£299.00 + £5.10 delivery	Used - Very Good	Seller: meekest Seller Rating: ★★★★★ 100% positive (12 total ratings) In stock. Dispatched from United Kingdom. Domestic delivery rates and return policy boxed complete with sandisk 2gb card	Add to Basket or Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering.
£300.00 + £5.10 delivery	Used - Like New	Seller: Troy Coker Seller Rating: ★★★★★ 91% positive over the past 12 months. (22 total ratings) In stock. Domestic delivery rates and return policy In very good condition with extra lens.	Add to Basket or Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering.
£339.99 + £5.10 delivery	Used - Good	Seller: Central Park Photography Seller Rating: ★★★★★ 100% positive over the past 12 months. (48 total ratings) In stock. Dispatched from United Kingdom. Domestic delivery rates and return policy Comes with these items Only: Canon 18-55mm Lens, charger, battery, neckstrap, usb cable, lens cap, body cap and 4GB card, UV ... Read more	Add to Basket or Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering.
£349.99 + £5.10 delivery	Used - Very Good	Seller: cameras-4-u Seller Rating: ★★★★★ 99% positive over the past 12 months. (713 total ratings) In stock. Dispatched from United Kingdom. Domestic delivery rates and return policy RDXFPD FOR 400D + 18-55 EF-S I FNS + INSTRUCTIONS + RATTIFY + CHARGER + CARB FS +	Add to Basket or Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering.

Figure 2.1 Consumers can easily compare product prices across a range of retailers.

The web's foundations in academia make it ideal for secondary research, with reports and data filed, indexed and available via a few savvy searches. Technology can be used to easily, and accurately, conduct surveys and also makes it possible to record data about consumers' online habits.

When researching the penetration of broadband in a particular market, a few web searches will reveal plenty of sources that can be compared and verified. If a company wants to gauge the demographics of visitors to their website, an online survey may be offered to website visitors. Online reputation management (ORM) tools can simultaneously allow companies to track consumer sentiment expressed online.

In this chapter we will look at the methods used for conducting online research as well as the pitfalls that exist in this area. While there are some challenges to remain aware of, research firms are increasingly turning to the Internet for research.

2.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Bounce rate	Single page view visits divided by entry pages.
Data	Statistics and facts collected for analysis.
Focus group	A form of qualitative research where a group of people are asked questions in an interactive group setting. From a marketing perspective, it is an important tool for acquiring feedback regarding new products and various topics.
Hypothesis	A proposed explanation for a situation used as a base for further investigation.
Listening labs	The set up of a testing environment where the use of a website or application by a consumer may be observed.
Observation/online ethnography	When a researcher immerses themselves in a particular environment in order to gather insights.
Online reputation management (ORM)	The understanding and influencing of the perception of an entity online. This entails ensuring that you know what is being said about you, and that you are leading the conversation.
Primary research	The collection of data to present a new set of findings from original research.
Qualitative data	Data that can be observed but not measured. Deals with descriptions.
Quantitative data	Data which can be measured or defined. Deals with numbers.
Research community	A community set up with the intention of being a source for research.
Research methodology	Methods employed in research for reaching results.
Sample size	The number of units or respondents in a sample of the population.

Secondary research	The collection of existing research data.
Sentiment	The emotion attached to a particular mention – whether it be positive, negative or neutral.
Statistically significant	This refers to a sample that is big enough to represent valid conclusions.

2.3 how it works

2.3.1 What is Market Research?

Market research is a process that aids business decisions. It involves systematically gathering, recording and analysing data and information about customers, competitors and the market.

Research can be based on **primary data** or **secondary data**. Primary research is conducted when data is gathered for a particular product or hypothesis. This is where information does not exist already or is not accessible, and so needs to be specifically collected from consumers or businesses. Surveys, focus groups, research panels and research communities can all be used when conducting primary market research.

Secondary research uses existing, published data as a source of information. It can be more cost effective than conducting primary research. The Internet opens up a wealth of resources for conducting this research. The data would, however, originally have been collected for solving problems other than the one at hand, so it might not be sufficiently specific. Secondary research can be useful in identifying problems to be investigated through primary research.

Research can also be classified as **qualitative** or **quantitative**. Qualitative research can be classified as exploratory. Qualitative research aids in identifying potential hypotheses, whereas quantitative research puts hard numbers behind these hypotheses. Qualitative research seeks to find out what potential consumer perceptions and feelings exist around a given subject. This research can often be used to advise the design of quantitative research, which relies on numerical data to demonstrate statistically significant outcomes.

The Internet is a useful tool for both primary and secondary research, and can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. In fact, the communities on the web can be viewed as one large focus group, regularly and willingly sharing their opinions on products, markets and companies. Today, organisations transacting online have a wealth of research information freely available to them, and sophisticated tools for gathering further data.

2.3.2 Research Methodology

Research should involve certain steps:

- Establish the goals of the project
- Determine your sample
- Choose data collection method
- Collect data
- Analyse results
- Formulate conclusions and actionable insights. For example, producing reports.

Most often, market research is focused around specific issues unique to a business or brand. It is therefore not always possible to get hold of comparable information in order to aid in decision making. This is why it can be useful to start from a specific research problem or hypothesis.

Your research question should guide your market research and your entire process, and will determine your choice of data collection.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Quantitative research gathers data that can be statistically analysed to determine results. Data must be formally gathered, and should be collected to *test* a hypothesis as opposed to *determine* a hypothesis.

Qualitative data can be more difficult to quantify. Typically, because base sizes are smaller and not necessarily representative of the market under investigation (as it can be more expensive and time consuming to gather and analyse the data), qualitative data cannot be taken as quantified. It is, however, valuable in aiding a researcher in interpreting the market perspective. It is possible to combine approaches, producing data that can be used both qualitatively and quantitatively.

For example, in the *Online Reputation Management* chapter tools that can track brand name mentions are outlined. This data can then be analysed qualitatively, allowing the researcher to examine the mentions and use judgement to determine sentiment, or quantitatively, where mentions can be assigned numeric values across a range of categories which are used to generate a reputation score. One example of this is BrandsEye's online reputation algorithm.

When both qualitative and quantitative research are used, qualitative research usually takes place first to get an idea of the issues to be aware of, and then quantitative research tests the theories put forward in qualitative research.

note

With larger sample sizes, qualitative data may be analysed quantitatively.

The main differences between quantitative and qualitative research are represented in the following table.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH
Group Size	Group Size
Small number of participants - usually focus groups of six to 10 respondents led by a moderator.	Large numbers of respondents - 100 or more, depending on the size of the population you are wanting to generalise about are generally surveyed.
Approach	Approach
Generates ideas and concepts - leads to issues or hypotheses to be tested.	Tests known issues or hypotheses.
Ends with hypotheses for further research	Begins with hypotheses
Seeks complexity	Seeks consensus, the norm
Context of issues	Generalisation
Disadvantages	Disadvantages
Shouldn't be used to evaluate pre-existing ideas.	Issues can only be measured if there are known prior to beginning the survey.
Results are not predictors of the population.	Sample size must be sufficient for predicting the population.
Advantages	Advantages
Looks at the context of issues and aims to understand perspectives.	Statistically reliable results to determine if one option is better than the alternatives.

Figure 2.2 Key differences between qualitative research and quantitative research.

Gathering data: Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Both quantitative and qualitative research can be conducted using primary or secondary data, and the Internet provides an ideal tool for both avenues.

Web analytics packages are a prime source of data. Using data such as search terms, referral URLs and internal search data can lead to qualitative information about the consumers visiting a website. However, when data is measurable and specific, such as impressions and clickthrough rates, it leads to quantitative research.

Sample size is an important factor in conducting research and that sample should be representative of the population you are targeting as a whole. If your business transacts both online and offline, be aware that using only online channels for market research might not be representative of your true target market. However, if your business transacts only online, offline channels for your market research are less necessary.

Primary and Secondary Research

The Internet is a useful tool when conducting both primary and secondary research. Not only are there a number of free tools available when it comes to calculating things such as sample size and confidence levels (see *Tools of the Trade* for some examples), but it is also an ideal medium to reach large numbers of people at a relatively low cost. Notably, the origins of the web as a network for academics to share information make it a useful tool for researching existing research reports.

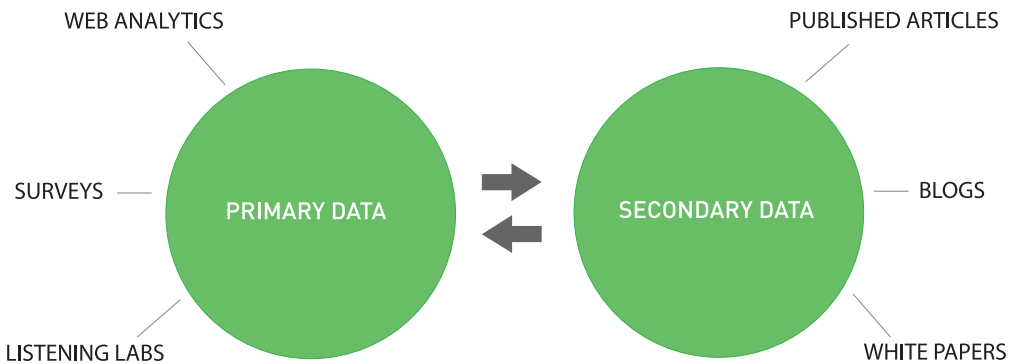


Figure 2.3 Sources of primary and secondary research data, based on Aaker et al p 106.

The Internet and Secondary Research

Market research based on secondary resources uses data that already exists for analysis. This includes both internal data and external data and is useful for exploring the market and marketing problems that exist.

Research based on secondary data should precede primary data research. It should be used in establishing the context and parameters for primary research.

Uses of secondary data:

- The data can provide enough information to solve the problem at hand, thereby negating the need for further research.
- Secondary data can provide sources for hypotheses that can be explored through primary research.

- Sifting through secondary data is a necessary precursor for primary research, as it can provide information relevant to sample sizes and audience, for example.
- The data can be used as a reference base to measure the accuracy of primary research.

note

See the chapters *Web Analytics and Conversion Optimisation* for details of how to use web analytics.

Companies that manage transactions via online properties have access to a wealth of data due to the interactions that can be recorded digitally. This data can then be mined. Every action performed on the company website is recorded in the server logs for the website.

Customer communications are also a source of data that can be used, particularly communications with a customer service department. Committed customers who complain, comment or compliment are providing information that can form the foundation for researching customer satisfaction.

note

The *Online Reputation Management* chapter goes into detail about using the Internet to track and monitor online mentions of a product, company or brand.

Social networks, blogs and other forms of social media have emerged as forums where consumers discuss their likes and dislikes, and can be particularly vocal about companies and products. This data can, and should, be tracked and monitored to establish consumer sentiment. If a community is established for research purposes, this should be considered primary data, but using social media to research existing sentiments is considered secondary research.

The Internet is an ideal starting point for conducting secondary research based on published data and findings. But, with so much information out there, it can be a daunting task to find reliable resources.

Results 1 - 10 of about 1,080,000,000 for research

The first point of call for research online is usually a search engine, such as www.google.com or www.yahoo.com. Search engines usually have an array of advanced features, which can aid online research. For example, Google offers:

- [Advanced search](http://www.google.co.za/advanced_search?hl=en) (http://www.google.co.za/advanced_search?hl=en)
- [Google Scholar](http://scholar.google.co.za/schhp?hl=en) (<http://scholar.google.co.za/schhp?hl=en>)
- [Google Book Search](http://www.google.co.za/books?hl=en) (<http://www.google.co.za/books?hl=en>)

Learning how to use search engines to find the information you need is a valuable skill in using the Internet for research.

Many research publications are available online, some for a fee and some at a cost. Many of the top research companies feature analyst blogs, which provide some industry data and analysis for free.

Some notable resources are:

- www.e-consultancy.com
- www.hitwise.com
- www.pewinternet.org (US data)
- www.worldwideworx.com (SA data)

The Internet and Primary Research

Primary research involves gathering data for a specific research task. It is based on data that has not been gathered beforehand. Primary research can be either qualitative or quantitative.

Primary research can be used to explore a market and can help to develop the hypotheses or research questions that must be answered by further research. Generally, qualitative data is gathered at this stage. For example, online research communities can be used to identify consumer needs that are not being met and brainstorm possible solutions. Further quantitative research can investigate what proportion of consumers share these problems and which potential solutions best meet those needs.

2.3.3 Data Collection Methods

In offline research, there are a number of methodologies, and arguably online research is just one tool added to the greater toolbox.

In online research, data collection methods include:

Focus groups

Much like with offline focus groups, online focus groups involve respondents reacting to a particular topic. In the online context, respondents can be gathered from all over the world and react in real time, arguably being freer with their responses given that they can be anonymous in an electronic environment.

Personal interviews

There are various tools available to the online researcher for conducting personal interviews. Whether in a private chat room or through a video interview, the connection afforded by the Internet can connect a researcher with many people around the world and make it possible to conduct interviews with more anonymity, should respondents require it.

Observation/Online ethnography

Taking its cue from offline ethnography, online ethnography requires a researcher to immerse themselves in a particular environment. In this way insights can be gathered that may not have been attainable from a direct

note

In 2005, General Motors launched a blog called Fast Lane. They said: "We've been wanting to create this direct line of communication so that our various stakeholders aren't going to message boards to talk about us - they have an opportunity to come and talk directly to us. We're big into getting feedback from our customers, employees and others, taking their comments to become a better company and develop better products. We're really getting some excellent feedback. Just about every discussion we have on the FastLane blog, we've had an excellent dialog." This communication medium has become an important source of customer research, eliciting comments and feedback from committed consumers (Fever 2005).

interview. However, they do depend more heavily on the ethnographer's interpretation. Terms often associated with online ethnography are virtual ethnography and netnography.

The significance in approach here is not to view opinions and sentiment shared in social spaces as *content*, but to view these as *insights* into the consumer mindset, shared in a particular context. In terms of market research these methods are only starting to be used.

Online research communities

Although online communities are a valuable resource for secondary research, communities can also provide primary data. General Motors' Fast Lane blog is an example of an online research community that aids the gathering of research data. The blog can be used as a means to elicit feedback to a particular research problem. This is qualitative data that can aid the company in exploring their research problem further.

discussion

Whom would you select to participate in listening lab exercises? How do you think the demographic of your population affects the outcome of these tests?

Listening labs

When developing websites and online applications, usability testing is a vital process that will ensure the website or application is able to meet consumers' needs. Listening labs involve setting up a testing environment where the use of a website or application by a consumer may be observed.

Conversion optimisation

Conversion optimisation aims to determine the factors of an advert, website or web page that can be improved so as to make the website convert best. From PPC advertising, to email subject lines to shopping cart design, tests can be set up to determine what variables are affecting the conversion rate of visitors to the website.

In the *Web Analytics* chapter there are details and tools for running tests, such as A/B split testing and multivariate testing.

Online surveys: gathering data

When developing surveys you can combine qualitative data with quantitative data – it just depends on how the questions are asked. Conducting surveys online allows for data to be captured immediately, and data analysis can be performed easily and quickly. By using email or the Internet for conducting surveys, geographical limitations for collecting data can be overcome cost effectively.

Developing technology also allows for sophisticated and user-friendly surveys to be compiled. For example, as opposed to indicating impressions on a sliding scale, respondents can indicate emotional response.

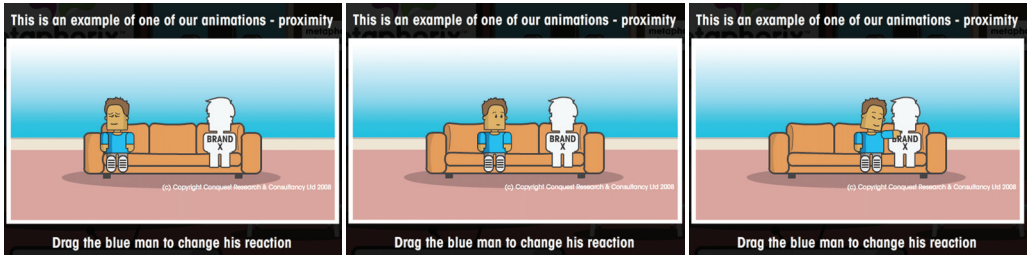


Figure 2.4. In some instances, respondents can indicate an emotional response as opposed to indicating impressions on a sliding scale.

Source: <http://www.metaphorixuk.com>

Vs.

Rate how you feel about a brand:

negative

neither positive nor negative

positive

Sample size

Qualitative research is usually conducted with a small number of respondents in order to explore and generate ideas and concepts. Quantitative research is conducted with far larger numbers, enough to be able to predict how the total population would respond.

Because quantitative research aims to produce predictors for the total population, sample size is very important. Sample size in the case of a survey is the number of respondents in the survey. The sample size needs to be sufficient in order to make statistically accurate observations about the population.

For example, if you have 4 000 registered users of your website, you don't need to survey all of them in order to understand how the entire population behaves. You only need to survey 351 users to get a sample size that gives you a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 5\%$ confidence interval. This means that you can be 95% sure your results are accurate within $\pm 5\%$.

There are several sample size calculators mentioned in *Tools of the Trade*.

Developing surveys: asking questions

The design of a survey is important in its success, along with the questions asked. A survey can comprise of any number and type of questions, and these

should be structured in such a way that more complicated questions only appear once users are comfortable with the survey.

Thank you for being a customer. Please help us improve our product and our service to you by completing this survey.

The entire survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

1. What is your overall satisfaction rating with our company?

- 5 - Very Satisfied
- 4 - Somewhat Satisfied
- 3 - Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied
- 2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied
- 1 - Very Dissatisfied

2. Please tell us why you feel that way.

3. How likely are you to recommend our product to a friend or colleague?

- 5 - Very Likely
- 4 - Somewhat Likely
- 3 - Neither Likely Nor Unlikely
- 2 - Somewhat Unlikely
- 1 - Very Unlikely

4. Please tell us why you feel that way.

Figure 2.5. Online surveys are a great way of determining user sentiment.

Be careful that you do not introduce bias when creating questions by asking leading questions.

Example of leading question bias:

Example: We have recently introduced new features on the website to become a first class web destination. What are your thoughts on the new site?

Replace with: What are your thoughts on the changes to the website?

note

If there are enough respondents to an open-ended question, the responses can be used quantitatively. For example, you can say with some certainty, “37% of people thought that case studies were an important feature.”

Questions in the survey should be brief, easy to understand and, most of all, easy to answer.

Types of Survey Questions

1. Open-Ended Types

Open-ended questions allow respondents to answer in their own words. This usually results in qualitative data.

Example:

What features would you like to see on the website for the digital marketing textbook

(www.quirk.biz/digital-marketingtextbook)? _____

2. Closed-Ended Types (Multiple Choice – One Answer or Multiple Answers)

These questions give respondents specific responses to choose from. This results in quantitative data.

Example:

Do you use the digital marketing textbook website?

Choose one that applies.

- Yes
- No

What features of the digital marketing textbook website do you use?

Tick all that apply.

- Blog
- Case studies
- Free downloads
- Additional resources

3. Ranked or Ordinal Questions

These questions ask respondents to rank items in order of preference or relevance. Respondents are given a numeric scale to indicate order. This results in quantitative data.

Example:

Rate the features of the digital marketing textbook website, where 1 is the most useful and 4 is the least useful.

- Blog
- Case studies
- Free downloads
- Additional resources

4. Matrix and Rating Types

These types of questions can be used to quantify qualitative data. Respondents are asked to rank behaviour or attitude.

Example:

The digital marketing textbook website is a useful tool for further studies.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
-------------------------------	----------------------	---------------------	-------------------	----------------------------

Or

The digital marketing textbook website is a useful tool for further studies.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5
-------------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------------------------

Rating scales can be balanced or unbalanced. When creating the questions and answers, choosing balanced or unbalanced scales will affect whether you are collecting data where someone can express a neutral opinion or not.

Balanced				
Very Poor 1	Poor 2	Average 3	Good 4	Very Good 5

Unbalanced			
Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Very Good 4

The screenshot shows the homepage of Mobile Marketing Watch. The header includes navigation links (Home, About, Contact, Newsletter, Resource Guides, RSS Feed) and a search bar. The main content area features a 'Featured Post' titled 'MobileMarketingWatch Survey: Win \$50!'. The post text explains the survey's purpose and offers a \$50 prize to three lucky respondents. A 'Click Here to take survey' link is provided. To the right, there is an advertisement for a whitepaper titled 'What is a short code?' and 'What is premium SMS?'. The sidebar on the left shows an 'ARCHIVES' section with a list of months from October 2008 to July 2007.

Figure 2.6 Mobile Marketing Watch chose to incentivise their readers with a possible prize.

Source: mobilemarketingwatch

How to get responses: Incentives and Assurances

As the researcher, you know what's in it for you when sending out a survey: you will receive valuable data that will aid in making business decisions. But what is in it for the respondents?

According to Survey Monkey, the ways in which the surveys are administered play a role in response rates for surveys, and these can be relative:

- Mail: 50% adequate, 60-70% good to very good
- Phone: 80% good
- Email: 40% average, 50-60% good to very good
- Online: 30% average
- Classroom pager: 50+% good
- Face to face: 80-85% good

(University of Texas 2007)

Response rates can be improved by offering respondents an incentive for completing the survey, such as a chance at winning a grand prize, a lower priced incentive for every respondent, or even the knowledge that they are improving a product or service that they care about.

There is a train of thought that paying incentives is not always a good thing. Amongst less affluent or educated respondents it may predispose them to feel that they need to give so-called "good" or "correct" answers which may bias your results. Alternatively you may attract respondents who are in it just for the reward. One approach could be to run the survey with no incentive with the option to offer one if responses are limited.

Designing the survey so as to assure respondents of the time commitment and privacy implications of completing the survey can also help to increase responses.

Running surveys online also allows for continuous surveys at minimal cost to you. Simple polls can be used in forums and on blogs to generate regular feedback. Website satisfaction surveys are also an easy way to determine the effectiveness of a website and marketing campaigns.

Conducting research surveys: a Step-by-Step Guide

As with all things in digital marketing, careful planning goes a long way to determining success. As market research can be an expensive project, it is important that planning helps to determine the cost vs. the benefit of the research. Qualitative research and secondary research are critical steps in determining whether a larger scale research project is called for.

Bear in mind that many tasks that fall under the umbrella of research should

be ongoing requirements of digital marketing activities, such as conversion testing and optimising, and online reputation management. Polls and small surveys can also be conducted regularly, and non-intrusively, among visitors to your website.

1. Establish the goals of the project: What you want to learn

Secondary research can be used to give background and context to the business problem, and the context in which the problem can be solved. It should also be used to determine alternative strategies for solving the problem, which can be evaluated through research. Qualitative research, particularly using established online research communities, can also help in determining what the business problems are that need to be solved. Ultimately, determine what actions you will consider after the research is completed, and what insights are required to make a decision on those actions.

2. Determine your sample: Whom you will interview

You do not need to survey the entire population of your target market. Instead, a representative sample can be used to determine statistically relevant results. See *Tools of the Trade* for some online calculators for determining sample size.

In selecting a sample, be careful to try to eliminate bias from the sample. Highly satisfied customers, for example, could give very different results to highly dissatisfied consumers.

3. Choose survey methodology: How you will gather data

The Internet provides a multitude of channels for gathering data. Surveys can be conducted online or via email. Online research panels and online research communities can all be used for gathering data. Web analytics can also be used to collect data, but this is passive form of data collection. Determine what will provide you with the information you need to make decisions. Be clear on whether your research calls for qualitative or quantitative data as this determines the methodology as well.

4. Create your questionnaire: What you will ask

Keep the survey and questions simple and ensure that the length of the survey does not overwhelm respondents. A variety of questions can be used to make sure that the survey is not repetitive.

Be sure when creating the questions that you keep your goals in mind. Don't be tempted to try to collect too much data, or you are likely to overwhelm respondents.

5. Pre-test the questionnaire, if practical: Test the questions

Test questionnaires to determine if questions are clear and that it renders

correctly. Ensure that test respondents understand the questions, and that they are able to answer them satisfactorily.

6. Conduct interviews and enter data: Ask the questions

Run the survey! Online surveys can be completed by respondents without you being present. You just need to make sure you get it in front of the right people. A survey can be sent to an email database or advertised online.

7. Analyse the data: Produce the reports

Remember that quantitative data must be analysed for statistical significance. The reports should aid in the decision making process and produce actionable insights.

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- Easy**
Fast setup gets you collecting customer feedback in under 5 minutes.
- Affordable**
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- Scalable**
Need more features or survey responses? Upgrade at the click of a button!
- Actionable**
Use real-time data to improve your website and increase customer satisfaction and task completion.

Free Trial!

Figure 2.7 4Q Surveys.

2.3.4 Room for Error

With all research, there is a given amount of error that needs to be dealt with. Bias may arise during the administering of a questionnaire (e.g. interviewers possibly leading the respondents) or be present in the design and wording of the questionnaire itself. There could be sample errors or respondent errors. Using the Internet to administer surveys and questionnaires removes the bias that may arise from an interviewer. However, with no interviewer to explain questions, there is potential for greater respondent error. This is why survey design is so important, and why it is crucial to test and run pilots of the survey before going live.

Respondent errors also arise when respondents become too familiar with the survey process. There is the possibility of respondents becoming desensitised. There is even a growing trend of professional survey takers, especially where there is an incentive involved. The general industry standard is to limit respondents to being interviewed once every six months.

note

4Q Surveys (<http://www.4qsurvey.com/>) allows you to set up a survey for free on your site that asks four important questions. One of them finds out whether your site visitors have achieved what they came to your site to achieve. Online response rates can be very low, so keeping a survey like this going means that you can continuously learn how to improve your user experience.

Sample error is a fact of market research. Some people are just not interested in, nor will ever be interested in, taking part in surveys. Are these people fundamentally different, with different purchasing behaviour, from those who do? Is there a way of finding out? To some extent, web analytics, which tracks the behaviour of all visitors to your website, can be useful in determining the answer to these questions.

When conducting any survey, it is crucial to understand who is in the target market, and what the best way to reach that target market is. Web surveys exclude elements of the population, due to access or ability. It is vital to determine if it is acceptable to the survey, and to use other means of capturing data if not.

2.4 conducting research: who's going to pay?

Regular research is an important aspect of the growth strategy of any business, but it can be tough to justify the budget necessary for research without knowing the benefit to the business. Conducting research can cost little more than the time of someone who works for a company, depending on the skills base of employees, or it can be an expensive exercise involving external experts. Deciding where your business needs are on the investment scale depends on the depth of the research required, and what the expected growth will be for the business. When embarking on a research initiative, the cost to benefit ratio should be determined.

Testing should be an ongoing feature of any digital marketing activity. Tracking is a characteristic of most digital marketing, which allows for constant testing of the most basic hypothesis: is this campaign successful in reaching the goals of the business?

2.5 pros and cons

There is an increasing trend amongst market researchers to turn to online tools in their research processes. The Internet allows for research at a far lower cost, can more easily cross geographic boundaries and can speed up the research process. This is not to say there are not downsides. While the Internet makes it possible to reach a far larger group of people without the cost of facilitators, this does come with some challenges. For example, not having the ability to control the environments in which information is being gathered. For an online sample, it's important to focus on getting the correct number of people to make your study statistically viable. If your questions are not carefully drafted, confusing questions could lead to answers that are not relevant or flawed. Additionally, online incentives could lead to answers which are not truthful, meaning that the value of the data could be questionable.

The value of Internet research should by no means be discounted, but it is important to consider carefully the nature of the study done, and interrogate the validity and legitimacy of the data as a valid representation. Data is only meaningful if it is representative, so make sure to establish goals and realistic expectations for your research.

2.6 summary

Market research is the gathering and analysing of data for the purpose of understanding a market and making business decisions. Information can be gathered about customers, competitors and the market.

Research can be conducted based on secondary data, which refers to information or data that is already published or recorded, or based on primary data, which is data gathered specifically for a particular research problem.

Research can also be qualitative or quantitative. The Internet provides the tools for online research communities for gathering qualitative data, while online tools such as surveys and web analytics packages are ideal for gathering quantitative data.

Analytics and online report tools play a big role in providing the data that aids marketers in making decisions. While these are digital marketing tactics in themselves and are covered later in this book, keep in mind that they also provide information that can feed into research conducted for a particular purpose.

2.7 tools of the trade

- www.surveymonkey.com for creating online surveys
- Split test calculator www.usereffect.com/split-test-calculator

Sample size calculator:

- <http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/samplesizecalculator.htm>
- http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrsmplng_errr.htm
- http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrsmplng_errr99.htm
- Internet Usage World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>
- Google Insights <http://www.google.com/insights/search/>
- Silverback usability testing software <http://www.silverbackapp.com/>

2.8 case study: BrandsEye

BrandsEye (www.brandseye.com) is an online reputation management service that needed to revamp its interface to suit its evolving user's needs.

Launched in March 2008 as the world's second international tool of its kind, BrandsEye scours the Internet in near real-time for mentions of specific keywords before calculating a reputation score based on the gathered data. The original BrandsEye launch was met with much success, but the team quickly realised that public feedback was critical, and switched its business pricing and offering to meet the consumers' needs soon after. As the market developed, BrandsEye decided it would need to adapt or risk falling behind competition.

The main criticism of BrandsEye was its interface, which some users found difficult to navigate and understand. At the time of BrandsEye's relaunch, Tim Shier, Managing Director at BrandsEye said: "BrandsEye Version 2 was built in HTML5 with its users' experience as the number one priority. The new navigation is more intuitive and provides immediate insights and reporting capabilities."

BrandsEye
Protecting your online reputation

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Protect your online reputation

- Track and manage all of your consumers' conversations online
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- Perform in-depth and immediate market research
- Identify risks and leverage business opportunities

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Figure 2.8 BrandsEye version 2 interface.

That might sound rather simple now, but at the time BrandsEye needed to know exactly what customers thought of their tool.

Using a similar method to its launch in 2008, the team at BrandsEye worked throughout 2010 at cultivating personal relationships with industry and thought leaders to find out exactly what the market wanted from the product.

The team used a few main ways of gathering data:

- Focus groups
- Personal, one-on-one interviews
- Online conversation monitoring
- Active online engagement.

This allowed BrandsEye to gather qualitative data from the users directly, while the BrandsEye tool itself allowed the team to gather quantitative data from online mentions. Both of which were used to direct the business development, prioritise software changes and direct resource allocation into the likes of support and new servers. While this was applied in an ongoing fashion throughout the year it was focused solely on the software as they began specifying and implementing the new version.

BrandsEye approached key clients and partners at fundamental development stages to gauge their reaction and get their input. All major partners were plotted upon a persona matrix which allowed them to identify their needs and, more generally, develop the software to meet their general and specific set of requirements. From this the hypothesis was created and continually tested. Using this input, BrandsEye was able to prioritise functionality and the team's focus. Clients were also given the chance to test out unreleased versions and comment on aspects that they felt needed tweaking.

This allowed BrandsEye to gauge how people reacted to changes well before the software was officially made public.

Shier also said that social media played a large role in the relaunch, as users from different platforms were able to critique BrandsEye features while it was still in Beta. This has vastly improved their ability to plan future releases and fix current issues. This approach has allowed BrandsEye to get over 200 pieces of functional feedback on the system and the focus to have solved upward of 77% of these items in the first week.

BrandsEye made very specific business promises to these leaders, including improved algorithms; greater data segmentation; better team workflow within BrandsEye itself; and a system of transparency and honesty to foster trust with clients. Shier said: "We then looked at these relationships to see how they could help guide business development based on these promises. The simple reality is that we cannot understand our software as well as our consumers who use it daily do – we therefore need to be very aware of their feedback. As a business principle our development strategy is now almost entirely consumer driven."

When BrandsEye Version 2 launched in early February 2011, it received more than 700 tweets in three days and more than 20 press articles in the same time.

“It was a solution which met the exact market needs. We built a community of strong and vocal influencers, and saw our subscriber base grow by over 50 percent, and the countries where we have clients jump from 26 to 89 in nine days. This was largely owing to having a deeper understanding of the market and providing a solution which the community had been asking for.”

Shier said that BrandsEye has maintained the level of community involvement utilised during the launch.

“We received continued feedback from consumers. We’re all in the same side now, so issues are collectively discussed, briefed and solved. This is how market research should be – identify the insight, immediately look to implement it and then look to identify the next insight. This process solves many of bias issues which come with slow reporting and response latency in traditional research.”

case study questions

1. What did the BrandsEye team use market research for?
2. What methods did they use to gather data?
3. How did they apply the insights they gained?

chapter questions

1. What is the purpose of exploratory research?
2. What is primary research?
3. What role does online research play in the overall market research toolkit?

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[Accessed 29 September 2008]

image reference

Metaphorix. (Date unknown) *Metaphorix® in action*

<http://www.metaphorixuk.com>

[Accessed 29 June 2011]

further reading

- <http://www.pluggedinco.com/blog/> - Plugged In is a treasure trove for all things related to market research. Visit it regularly to stay up to date on trends or developments.
- <http://blog.freshnetworks.com/category/topics/onlineresearchcommunities/> - Visit this web page for tons of useful blog posts from a wide variety of sources.
- <http://s3.amazonaws.com/SurveyMonkeyFiles/SmartSurvey.pdf> [Smart Survey Design](#) - This useful white paper will help you master drawing up relevant web surveys.

What's inside: This chapter begins with an **introduction** to crowdsourcing as well as a brief **history** of its origins. We break down some **key terms and concepts** and look at the different types of crowdsourcing. We take a look at the **bigger picture**, discussing some crucial aspects of crowdsourcing followed by its **pros and cons**. Lastly, we conclude the chapter with a brief **summary** and a great example of crowdsourcing in the communications industry.

3.1 introduction

What is crowdsourcing? Well, we turn to the crowdsourced online encyclopedia for a definition: Wikipedia defines Crowdsourcing as “the act of taking tasks traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, and outsourcing it to a group of people or community (the crowd), in the form of an ‘open call’.” In its simplest terms, crowdsourcing is a distributed problem-solving and production model” one which often relies on an active community in order to be successful. Wikipedia is an example of what Clay Shirky calls Cognitive Surplus. Crowdsourcing, as we are discussing it in this chapter, relies heavily on the tools and communication forms made possible by the Internet.

Given that the Internet connects people all over the world through different publishing tools and technologies, the information and ideas that can be published through these channels has become a commodity in itself. Crowdsourcing takes advantage of this by asking and enabling people to share their ideas or creations in exchange for either an emotional or monetary reward.

note

Platforms like Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) allow anyone to edit most of their web pages. Why not visit the site to see if there is a page that you could improve?

In the past we had to gather physically to create crowds. Now with technology, crowds can be well-connected while being geographically distant. A savvy organisation can tap a wider range of talent and knowledge than that present within its own resources.

We can consider the creative agency and client environment. For clients, solutions to problems can be explored at a relatively low-cost and often very quickly. Unlike traditional creative agency models where an individual is paid per hour, crowdsourcing permits a client to pay a once-off cost for an exponential number of solutions. Ultimately a client only pays for the solutions they make use of, while those in the community who are not paid usually retain their intellectual property (IP).

By listening to the crowd and requesting their contributions, organisations can gain first-hand insight into their customers’ needs and desires, and build products and services that meet those needs and desires. With an earned sense of ownership, communities may feel a brand-building kinship with the community through collaboration and contribution. Less experienced individuals can demonstrate and hone their skills, and more established practitioners can earn money without long-term commitment.

One of the more widely known and non-commercial examples of crowdsourcing in the online world is Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>), an online encyclopaedia offering more than three million articles in the English language version alone. Created and maintained by volunteers, thousands of articles are added weekly and edited by a global community of students, professors

and everyday experts around the world. This is not just an example of a crowd creating a pool of information, but also a community taking ownership of a project by ensuring information is accurate and within the code of conduct required.



Figure 3.1 Wikipedia is one of the most well-known examples of Crowdsourcing.

While Wikipedia is an example of volunteer-based crowdsourcing, crowdsourcing in its commercial sense has emerged in the last few years as a practice with many proponents and detractors. Larger businesses are turning to crowdsourcing for anything from communications executions to research and development.

Of course such a dramatic shift from traditional commercial models raises some questions in terms of ownership and compensation. Crowdsourced solutions are often owned by the entity that broadcast the problem in the first place, and the individuals responsible for the solution are rewarded, in any number of ways.

We'll be covering a number of these issues in this chapter, and will delve into some practical advice to consider if you are interested in utilising crowdsourcing for your own brand.

3.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Amateur	A person without formal training or professional credentials in a specific field.
Brief	A document giving essential information concerning the problem that needs solving.

Creative	A term used in the advertising industry to describe people who produce creative products. For example designers or copywriters.
Collaboration	An online community working together on a single project.
Collective intelligence	A shared intelligence from the collaboration of many individuals.
Community	A social network of individuals who interact through a specific medium.
Crowd	A large undefined group of people made up of many online individuals.
Crowdsourcing	Taking a job traditionally performed by a professional and distributing it to an undefined, generally large group of people in the form of an open call.
Folksonomy	A form of crowdsourcing also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing or social tagging. The practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to interpret and categorise content.
Ideation	A process during which new ideas are created.
Intellectual property (IP)	Legal property rights over intangible creations of the mind, both artistic and commercial.
New agency model	The incorporation and use of crowdsourcing platforms to source marketing and communications solutions.
Open Call	When a request is made for anyone to submit solutions to a problem.
Open Source	In the context of Crowdsourcing this is when a cooperative activity is initiated and voluntarily undertaken by members of the public, not by a client or crowdsourcer.
Outsourcing	Work is conducted outside of an organisation by a specific defined individual or group of people.
Spec work	Fully executed creative work requested by crowdsourcing platforms that is not paid for upfront, and is only paid for when the work is chosen or accepted. Work that is not selected is not paid for.
User-generated	Various kinds of media content, publically available, that are produced by end-users.
Wiki	A simple website that can be edited in real time by a number of users.
Wisdom of the crowd	The collective knowledge, opinion or skills of a group of individuals rather than a single expert used to solve a problem. Usually used for consumer feedback and new product development.

3.3 history

The term “crowdsourcing” was first coined by technology commentator Jeff Howe in a *Wired Magazine* article in June 2006. It’s a relatively new term, but the concept dates back as far as the 1700s. Early editions of the Oxford English Dictionary were crowdsourced when thousands of volunteers submitted entries on slips of paper that were compiled into a dictionary.

Another early example of crowdsourcing is the Longitude Prize, an open contest run by the British government in 1714. The aim was to find a simple and practical method for the precise determination of a ship's longitude, something that had up to that point, stumped experts. A clockmaker named John Harrison made the most significant contribution to the solution with his work on chronometers, and is generally considered the winner.

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The Rise of Crowdsourcing	
Remember outsourcing? Sending jobs to India and China is so 2003. The new pool of cheap labor: everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R & D.	
By Jeff Howe	Page 1 of 4 next >>

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Claudia Menashe needed pictures of sick people. A project director at the National Health Museum in Washington, DC, Menashe was putting together a series of interactive kiosks devoted to potential pandemics like the avian flu. An exhibition designer had created a plan for the kiosk itself, but now Menashe was looking for images to accompany the text. Rather than hire a photographer to take shots of people suffering from the flu, Menashe decided to use preexisting images – stock photography, as it's known in the publishing industry.

In October 2004, she ran across a stock photo collection by Mark Harmel, a freelance photographer living in Manhattan Beach, California. Harmel, whose wife is a doctor, specializes in images related to the health care industry. "Claudia wanted people sneezing, getting immunized, that sort of thing," recalls Harmel, a slight, soft-spoken 52-year-old.

Feature:

The Rise of Crowdsourcing

Plus:

[5 Rules of the New](#)

[Labor Pool](#)

[Look Who's](#)

[Crowdsourcing](#)

Figure 3.2 The article written by Jeff Howe in 2006 where he first used the term "crowdsourcing".

Widespread use of the Internet has made launching a crowdsourcing project much easier. The Internet has enabled us to communicate a problem to crowds of diverse people from all over the world, who in turn are able to communicate with the problem owner and each other. Of course, focusing on the problem from a variety of perspectives increases the likelihood of a workable solution coming to light.

One of the earliest known examples of a crowdsourcing project that made use of the Internet is the 1998 Tunnel Journal project in Leidschendam. The Tunnel Journal was an interactive artwork: an LED display integrated into the walls of a tunnel along Leidschendam's main traffic routes. The community could feed the LED display with their own text messages via the tunnel's website. The project was discontinued by Leidschendam councillors because uncensored messages began reaching the Tunnel Journal's electronic message board. After revamping the website in July 2000, a new feature was added – a dynamic

filter allowing visitors to ban texts from the electronic display. Thus the public became its own filter, preventing derogatory remarks from featuring.

Since the launch of the Tunnel Journal (<http://bit.ly/i3zk5G>), web-based crowdsourcing has slowly gained momentum. Crowdsourcing projects of massive scale have been launched in recent years. This has been possible because of the tools internet connectivity offers for forming and managing large and diverse crowds, often in short time frames.

Early adopters to the crowdsourcing platform include Threadless (www.threadless.com) a crowdsourced online t-shirt store, iStockphoto (www.istockphoto.com) for crowdsourced stock photography and InnoCentive (www.innocentive.com). Since then, the number of crowdsourcing platforms has skyrocketed. Today anything can be crowdsourced, from tattoo designs to films, medical problems, music and even engineering problems.

Crowdsourcing has emerged as an execution of a far larger trend influenced by the mass adoption of the Internet.

The Internet acts as a global distribution channel, making it possible to publish information at a faster pace than ever on a global scale. But what matters far more is the quality and ability of an idea to stand out and spread. Ideas, and the subsequent materialisations, are no longer regulated by money or time, but rather by the value of what's on offer. An idea that took 10 minutes to come up with may be just as good, if not better, than an idea that took 10 hours of ruminating.

3.3.1 The “Rise of the Amateur”

When it comes to crowdsourcing, amateurs are competing with professionals in fields ranging from computer programming to the sciences. These people are hobbyists and enthusiasts who may not have the relevant professional qualifications, but can possess talent and passion in any given field. This devotion to a particular subject is ultimately what drives the crowdsourcing vehicle.

To a large extent the development of technology is again the great enabler here. People have access to a wider pool of information through the web. Software such as Photoshop and iMovie has made graphic design and film editing, for example, relatively easy to learn.

3.4 how it works

In a 2007 article, Josh Catone identified four types of crowdsourcing:

Invention:

Crowdsourcing is used to source ideas, often for new or existing product development. This means the community is tasked with creating ideas from scratch while also improving on and ranking ideas.

Examples of invention include Dell's Idea Storm (www.dellideastorm.com) and My Starbucks Idea (www.mystarbucksidea.com).

The screenshot shows the My Starbucks Idea website. At the top left is the Starbucks logo and the text "My Starbucks Idea". To the right is a "FAQ" link. Below this are three navigation tabs: "GOT AN IDEA?", "VIEW IDEAS", and "IDEAS IN ACTION". A horizontal line separates this from the main content area. Below the line, on the left, it says "Hi there, [Sign In] to make a comment." On the right, there are social media sharing options for Facebook, Twitter, and a plus sign, with the text "Follow us on twitter". Below this is a search bar with the text "Ideas so far" and "Search Ideas". To the left of the search bar is a "Q" icon. Below the search bar is a section titled "PRODUCT IDEAS" with a list of categories and their respective idea counts: "Coffee & Espresso Drinks" (25,148), "Frappuccino® Beverages" (1,696), "Tea & Other Drinks" (7,737), "Food" (11,630), "Merchandise & Music" (5,804), "Starbucks Card" (7,904), "New Technology" (811), and "Other Product Ideas" (8,095). Below this list is a section titled "EXPERIENCE IDEAS". On the right side of the main content area is a large image of a Starbucks store interior. Overlaid on the image is the text "SHARE. VOTE. DISCUSS. SEE." and "Share your ideas, tell us what you think of other people's ideas and join the discussion." The "my STARBUCKS IDEA" logo is in the bottom right corner of the image.

Figure 3.3 My Starbucks Idea is an example of a crowdsourcing initiative.

On My Starbucks Idea the community is asked to share, vote for and discuss ideas to improve Starbucks' products and services.

Creation:

New content is created, owned and maintained by a community on an already existing platform. The crowd can also contribute finished work or just an idea, allowing other members to flesh out concepts.

Good examples of this include Threadless (www.threadless.com), Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) and Idea Bounty (www.ideabounty.com).

Idea Bounty works via a system through which a client may post a brief which is then distributed amongst the community. The community then responds to the brief with creative solutions. The best solution to the problem posed is chosen and its creator rewarded.

Organisation:

Through this method crowdsourcing is used to create new content by organising already existing content. The community is charged with ranking information in terms of relevance and popularity.

Examples here include Digg (www.digg.com) and StumbleUpon (www.stumbleupon.com).

StumbleUpon is an online community where users discover and rate web pages, websites, images and video content. It acts as a personalised recommendation engine using peer-voting and social networking principles.

Prediction:

Prediction aims to predict trends by asking the community to submit ideas and vote for them.

Examples include Yahoo! Buzz (www.yahoo.com/buzz), Ramussen Markets and Media Predict (www.mediapredict.com).

On Media Predict, users bet on media trends such as TV viewership and books that are likely to sell well. Media Predict can generate predictions as to what will and what won't succeed; essentially helping media companies understand what consumers really want.

3.5 how it works in business

When applied in a commercial sense there are three dominant ways in which crowdsourcing is used:

1. Product development:

The crowd's knowledge is used to improve an existing product or suggest new products. The consumer interaction and buzz also provides a valuable branding effect.

Examples include Dell's Idea Storm and GM's FastLane blog (<http://fastlane.gmblogs.com>).

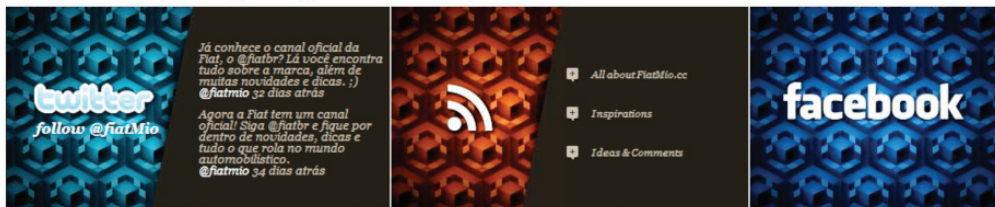
2. Initiatives and new business:

In this case, crowdsourcing is used to generate business ideas or product

concepts, and often funding as well. Crowdsourcing can also connect those who have business ideas with those who can provide the funding to get them off the ground.

In 2009 Fiat Brazil asked Internet users to send in suggestions as to how the Fiat Mio (www.fiatmio.cc) could be improved. The company kept the brief wide, and eventually received more than 10 000 suggestions through social networking sites. These suggestions ranged from giving new car owners manuals on USB flash drives to more outlandish ideas such as funnelling garbage through the engine in an effort to recycle.

Follow the project



How can I participate? Follow **Twitter** stay tuned with everything that takes place on FiatMio.cc

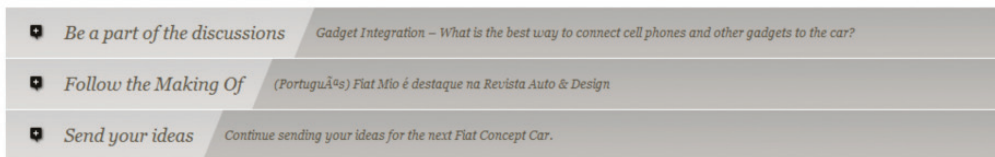


Figure 3.4 The crowdsourcing campaign built around the Fiat Mio garnered more than 10 000 suggestions on how to improve the car.

3. Communications ideas:

Crowdsourcing in a communication sense is used primarily within the advertising and marketing industry.

It involves the crowdsourcing of ideas for the communication of a brand message, advertising message or value proposition. This could include the crowdsourcing of logo designs, televisions advertisement scripts or new marketing concepts in any shape or form.

A well-known example is Dorito's crowdsourcing of their Super Bowl advertisement (www.crashthesuperbowl.com). In a much publicised open call to the public, Doritos tasked the community with creating an original, once-off spot – and received hundreds of advertisements.

As mentioned previously, a possible perk of crowdsourcing is an increase in brand exposure. Dorito's – and the Super Bowl - benefitted from an increase in attention because of this unusual method of ad creation.

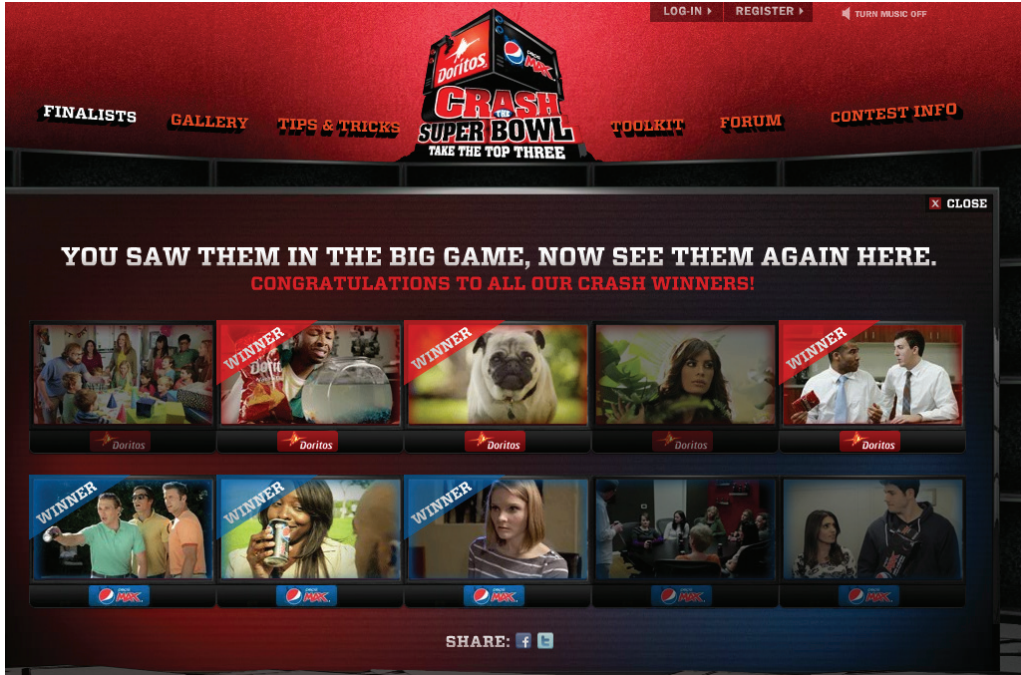


Figure 3.5 The Crash the Superbowl campaign.

3.6 how a crowdsourcing campaign is managed

Given that crowdsourcing often depends on a community of respondents, there are different approaches to managing these platforms – and specific challenges - in an online context.

1. Centrally controlled

This is where the process is centrally controlled by a guiding force that channels ideas and formalises the entire process.

Example: Idea Bounty - A specialist team helps define the challenge and brief, while the client chooses the winning idea.

2. Community controlled

This works in an entirely opposite way. Here the community controls the process and the ultimate outcome.

Example: Threadless – Users create original t-shirt designs which other users rank in terms of popularity via a voting system. The most popular designs are printed onto shirts which are then sold by the site.

3.6.1 The Importance of the Community and Motivations to Participate

The idea of a community is the chief motivator behind crowdsourcing. The community should be viewed as a crowdsourcing platform's most important asset – they are essentially an economically productive unit. Without a community, a crowdsourcing project could never flourish. Put simply, no work could actually be done.

Understanding why communities exist and what motivates individuals to participate is essential to achieving success. Unfortunately, the needs of a community, how it should be managed, and rewarded, are often overlooked.

Communities using crowdsourcing platforms exist for different reasons. Communities like the previously mentioned Dell's Idea Storm and My Starbucks Idea exist because there are people who have a keen interest in and affinity for those brands. They participate in the community because they want to better products and services they receive.

Individuals should be rewarded for their contributions with awards for outstanding ideas. Idea Bounty, like iStockphoto, offers keen hobbyists a platform to meaningfully contribute to a cause, and, importantly, be rewarded for their contributions.

note

Communities are the lifeblood of a crowdsourcer, as they rely just as much on participants for quality ideas as the community members rely on the platform. Do you belong to any online communities, and if so, why?

3.7 the pros and cons of crowdsourcing

A well-implemented crowdsourcing strategy has the potential to be incredibly rewarding for a brand, but that doesn't mean that things can't go wrong. As with many marketing tactics, there are several well-defined pros and cons. Some of the opportunities and challenges of crowdsourcing when it comes to brands and agencies are:

PROS

- Handing over the ownership of your brand encourages consumer involvement.
- Inter-disciplinary collaboration brings fresh input.
- Individuals have opportunities and connections that did not exist before.
- Problems can be explored at a low cost and often very quickly.

- Often, a client pays for results, and only for what is used.
- The organisation can tap a wider range of talent and brainpower which may not be present within its own resources.
- Organisations can gain valuable insight into the desires of their customers.

CONS

- Many clients have no agency guidance or contribution towards a viable strategy and in some cases have very little control over production value, especially if the end result of the project is completed or finished work.
- When it comes to spec work, as opposed to merely an idea, the risk/reward ratio is fairly high. Not only is this taking advantage of an individual's efforts, but it can lead to work of a lesser quality.
- Legal issues are often overlooked and the IP of an individual's work is disregarded with no written contracts, nondisclosure agreements, employee agreements or agreeable terms with crowdsourced employees.
- The crowd's reliability can be somewhat altered by the Internet. As an example, many articles on Wikipedia may be of a high quality and edited by multiple people, thereby taking advantage of the crowd's collective wisdom. Other articles can be maintained by a single editor with questionable ethics and opinions. As a result articles may be incorrectly assumed to be reliable.
- Additional costs may be needed to bring a project to an acceptable conclusion.
- A crowdsourced project may fail due to the lack of financial motivation or reward. As a consequence, a project may be subjected to fewer participants, lower quality of work, lack of personal interest, global language barriers or difficulty managing a large-scale crowdsourced project.
- A crowdsourcer may have difficulties maintaining a working relationship with the community throughout the duration of a project. A danger is that some crowdsourced employees might feel a brand has taken advantage of their time or skills.

3.8 the bigger picture

note

Do you think that every brand can pull off a crowdsourced campaign? What sort of industries would be opposed to the open-call?

3.8.1 The New Agency Model

Crowdsourcing enables a shift in the agency model. Instead of allowing the marketing and branding process to be owned and managed by one agency, brands are pioneering an innovative new model with the use of crowdsourcing platforms.

The new agency model may be the next stage in the evolution of marketing. It is inherently more sensitive to market-forces as it levels the playing fields amongst amateur and professional creatives. Amateurs have the opportunity to communicate ideas to global brands - something they might never have had the chance to do. This also exposes the brand to a wider and more varied range of ideas and solutions. As an added benefit, PR is generated and direct interaction with a consumer base can provide unexpected insights. It also helps that crowdsourcing offers a very fast and often inexpensive way to source solutions to creative problems. This also gives the brand an opportunity to spend more money on the execution of the solution as a direct result of saving money on the ideation phase.

However, there are still many aspects of marketing that a crowdsourcing campaign could never replace. A marketing agency will still be needed for brand strategy development and the execution of multifaceted campaigns.

3.9 summary

Crowdsourcing is “the act of taking tasks traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, and outsourcing them to a group of people or community, through an “open call” to a large group of people (a crowd) asking for contributions”.

Crowdsourcing platforms give their communities a way to contribute meaningfully to a cause that they are passionate about and to be rewarded for their solutions. Community members may also feel a brand-building kinship with the crowdsourcing organisation through collaboration and contribution, while amateur community members may benefit from interacting with industry professionals.

For clients, solutions to problems can be explored at a relatively low-cost and often very quickly, and clients can gain first-hand insight into their customers’ needs and desires.

In a non-commercial sense, crowdsourcing is used to maintain websites through multilevel input. Together, community members edit, alter or upload information to websites, sticking to rules or guidelines depending on specific models.

However, without proper planning, negative effects can be encountered during a crowdsourcing campaign. Crowdsourcing a campaign does not guarantee a workable idea. Brands should take particular care to avoid creating a negative PR backlash by not remunerating a community adequately.

That said; both commercial and non-commercial projects can benefit from crowdsourcing as large groups of people are often able to approach problems from multiple angles, thus increasing the chances of finding the best solution. The Internet provides a way to tap into the collective knowledge of more than one billion people.

Netflix & The Crowdsourced Algorithm.

Netflix is a DVD and Blu-ray rental-by-mail and video streaming company operating in the United States. As of 2009 Netflix offered over 100 000 DVD titles and has a subscriber base of over 10 million customers. Apart from being able to offer a simple and easy-to-use service to its customers Netflix also prided itself on being able to recommend movies and content to its users in order to increase the overall value of the service.

In October 2006 Netflix launched a crowdsourcing project which would award \$100 000 to the person or team that could create an algorithm to increase the accuracy of their movie recommendations system by a factor of 10%. Each team was given massive amounts of anonymous user data on movie ratings to work with. On top of the grand prize, there was a yearly progression prize of \$50 000 to the team that made the biggest improvement from year to year.

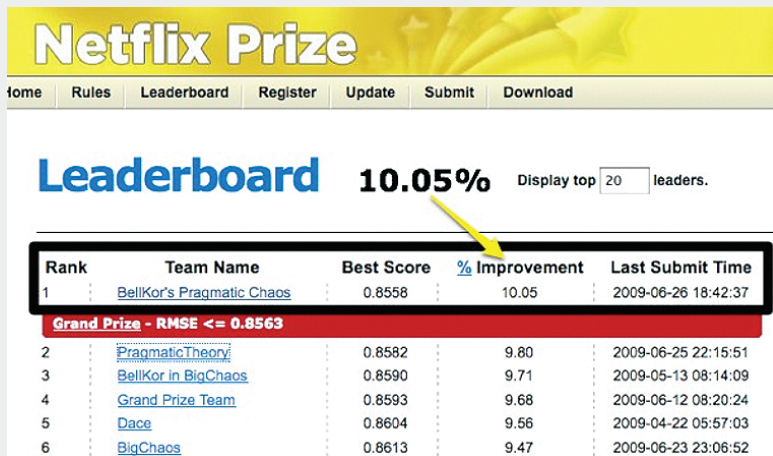


Figure 3.6 Netflix leaderboard showing 10% improvement.

The competition ran for three years and received a total of 44 014 entries from 5 169 teams in 186 countries. On September 21, 2009 the grand prize was awarded to the team: "Bellkor's Pragmatic Chaos". Their algorithm produced a 10% improvement in the movie recommendation system - a task that had stumped the Netflix technical team up to that point. As one of the first big crowdsourcing projects aiming to solve a major challenge Netflix demonstrated the successful use of crowdsourcing when it comes to solving tough technical problems as well as proving there is a willing and capable crowd ready take these challenges on (Iyer 2009).

3.10 case study

Peperami, one of the largest UK consumer brands, is a pork sausage snack manufactured by Unilever in Germany and Britain. Launched over 15 years ago, the brand communications had been handled by one creative agency from its launch until August 2009. Unilever decided to work with Idea Bounty (www.ideabounty.com) to crowdsource the concept for their new Peperami campaign.

The Animal, a crazed, masochistic sausage character, represented the brand in advertising communications. The character is well known and much loved for his uninhibited, unapologetic, and politically incorrect behaviour. For the last 15 years, he has been a central part of every Peperami campaign.



Figure 3.7 Peperami's *Animal* has long been an icon of the brand.

Unilever felt that after 15 years with the same agency, the Peperami brand and *The Animal* character needed an injection of fresh ideas for the next print and television adverts.

Idea Bounty wrote a brief that was very requirement specific and stipulated that the winning idea had to be able to support the future development of scripts and storyboards. This ensured that the ideas submitted would be well thought out and of a high quality. The brief also included examples of the past Peperami campaigns as well as templates for storyboards and scripts.

As a reward, a Bounty of \$10 000 was set with the option of an extra \$5 000 for extreme creativity.

The Idea Bounty team also produced a full-page print advert promoting the brief, which was published in *Campaign and Marketing Magazine* as well as online banners

displayed on various international marketing and advertising related sites.

Furthermore, the brief attracted a considerable amount of PR with extensive coverage both online and offline due to the nature – both positive and negative – of crowdsourcing at the time. In fact, Unilever received close to a million dollars return on investment off the press coverage alone (Splendid Communications, 2010).

The brief closed a full two months after launch and in total received 1 185 submissions. This was an extraordinarily large amount of ideas considering every entry met the basic requirements laid out in the brief.

Submissions made by creatives were of exceptional quality. Overall, the hosting of the brief was a massive success.

The large amount of quality submissions was due to the brief coming from a well-known brand with an engaging problem. The cherry on top was the Bounty on offer that encouraged people to invest their time and energy in their submission.

After much deliberation due to the quality of submissions, Idea Bounty and Unilever announced two outstanding winning ideas paying out a total Bounty of \$15 000.

The end result of the crowdsourced campaign is viewable at the Idea Bounty blog (<http://www.ideabounty.com/blog/post/2624/peperami-launch-their-crowdsourced-television-ad>).

case study questions

1. How does Idea Bounty fit into the New Agency Model?
2. What possible risks were posed by moving the Peperami account from the creative agency to crowdsourcing platform Idea Bounty?
3. Why is it important to stipulate requirements clearly in a brief to the community?
4. Why was it important that the brief contained examples of previous Peperami campaigns?

chapter questions

1. What is the definition of crowdsourcing?
2. What is the difference between the wisdom of the crowd and crowdsourcing?
3. Find some examples of online crowdsourcing platforms not mentioned in the chapter. How can you tell whether or not they are successful?
4. What are the main reasons for crowdsourcing taking off in the last few years?
5. What are the benefits of crowdsourcing for both consumers and brands?

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further reading

- <http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/> - Jeff Howe's blog
- <http://www.wikinomics.com/blog/> - Inspired by the best-selling book Wikinomics by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams
- <http://crowdsourc.wordpress.com/2007/01/18/prezzle-pay-day/> - An inside view on Crowdsourcing
- <http://www.openinnovators.net/> - a blog on open innovators and Crowdsourcing
- <http://crowdsourcingexamples.pbworks.com/Individual-businesses%2C-sites-or-forums-that-channel-the-power-of-online-crowds> - an extensive list of web-based Crowdsourcing platforms
- <http://bit.ly/ebmVkl> - How Wikipedia Works by Phoebe Ayers, Charles Matthews, and Ben Yates

create

introduction to create

Research, planning and strategy lay the foundation for building successful digital assets, whether these are websites or social media applications, videos or simple landing pages. In the next few chapters we detail how to create some of these digital assets.

When it comes to creating digital assets, one of the challenges is in creating assets that make the most of rapidly evolving technology, while remaining accessible to the range of users in your market. This is a similar challenge to creating these chapters: there is constant flux in this space. Because of this, we have tried to focus on principles for success.

Creating digital assets is not a solitary job. There are many different teams of experts who work together to create something that will delight users. So, it stands that there are many aspects to consider when looking at creating digital assets.

This is a book for marketers, but it is important that marketers understand the opportunities and challenges of the web. This is a vast subject, but hopefully the next few chapters will leave you feeling equipped to ask the right questions when relying on others to get the job done for you.

We start by looking at **Web Development and Design**. Although the focus of this chapter is websites, the principles apply to a range of digital assets. If you stop and think about it, words or copy are what guide our experiences online. The next chapter looks at **Writing for the Web**. Lastly, we've devoted a chapter just to **Mobile Development** as this is becoming such a fundamental way to reach and engage with potential customers.

What's inside: You'll find an **introduction to accessibility, usability and designing for persuasion**. You'll learn how to build a web property that is not only technically solid, but user-friendly and in line with your marketing goals. You'll also learn about the **web development process** from **planning through to design and launch**.

4.1. introduction

Digital assets are in many ways at the heart of successful digital marketing. These are the websites, widgets and applications we want customers and potential customers to interact with. However, many digital marketers, sadly, do not understand the importance of laying solid foundations when it comes to designing and developing web assets. Like building a house, good planning and foundations are vital to stability, longevity and even scalability. Building a good house is about a lot more than choosing the colours of the walls, and building great digital assets is certainly about a lot more than choosing the colours for a website.

Web development and design are not just about websites. Instead, we need to realise that the principles of good website development and design apply to all digital assets, such as applications in social networks or on mobile phones. The fundamental principle of good web development and design is to start with your users: the people who will actually be using and interacting with your website.

With so many new digital assets being developed each day to compete for your potential customer's attention, you need to create digital assets for the best possible user experience.

4.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Above the fold	All the content that can be seen on a screen without scrolling down.
Accessibility	The degree to which a website is available to users with physical challenges or technical limitations.
Alt tag	Information that is displayed if an image cannot be displayed; used by search engines to determine what an image is.
Breadcrumbs	Links, usually on the top of the page, that indicate where a page is in the hierarchy of the website.
Client-side	Transactions that take place before information is sent to the server.
Content Management System (CMS)	A system that is used for updating content of a website.
Common Page Elements	Items which appear on every page of a website.

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)	An approach to web design that aims for lightweight code and standards compliant websites.
Document Object Model (DOM)	A web standards approach to representing HTML and XML documents as objects.
Dynamic parameter	The elements of a URL that are dynamically generated.
Flash	A technology used to show video and animation; can be bandwidth heavy and unfriendly to search engine spiders.
HyperText Markup Language (HTML)	The code that is used to write most websites
HTML5	HTML 5 is the latest evolution of Hyper Text Markup Language, and is an update of HTML4, which was published in 1998. HTML5 allows for rich media content and interaction on the scale of Adobe Flash, but unlike its counterpart does not require additional third-party plugins.
Information architecture	The layout and structure of a website, which should be according to information hierarchy and categories.
Meta data	Information that can be entered about a web page and the elements on it that provide context and relevancy information to search engines; these used to be an important ranking factor.
Navigation	How a web user moves through a website, and the elements that assist the user.
Nofollow link	Nofollow is an attribute of a hyperlink, indicating that the link is not necessarily endorsed by the website. See the <i>SEO</i> chapter for more.
Open source	Unlike proprietary software, open source software makes the source code available so that other developers can build applications for the software, or even improve on the software.
Robots Exclusion Protocol	A protocol used to indicate to search engine robots which pages should not be indexed.
Search Engine Results Page (SERP)	What you see when you use a search engine.
Server-side	Transactions that take place on the server.
Sitemap	On a website, a page that links to every other page in the website, and displays these links organised according to the information hierarchy.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	A web address which is unique to every page on the Internet.

Usability	The measure of a website's ability to accomplish the goals of the user.
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium oversees the Web Standards project.
eXtensible Markup Language (XML)	A standard used for creating structured documents.

4.3 how it works

Successful websites, applications and digital assets all have the same foundation - good planning. Planning and research helps you to understand user needs and expectations, and how these fit into the context of your business. They inform site planning, and help with making good design and development choices.

Even before you begin planning, you need to have some core considerations in mind:

- **Accessibility**, which refers to barriers which might prevent users from accessing your website.
- **Usability**, which refers to how usable your website is to your users.
- **Searchability**, which refers to how your website ensures that it can be found via search.
- **Discoverability**, which refers to how your website capitalises on social media to make it more shareable and discoverable.

4.3.1 Accessibility Considerations

There are two types of barriers to users accessing websites and content:

- **Technical barriers**, such as browser compatibility.
- **Users ability barriers**, such as language or sight problems.

Technical barriers can be easier to qualify and judge. Establish up front what browsers your website will support, and test to ensure that it is compatible across those browsers. The major browsers include Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Apple Safari. You need to check what versions of these browsers should be supported.

With the growing use of mobile devices to access the web, mobile browser compatibility is also important. Be careful of using technologies, such as Flash, which cannot be viewed on some mobile devices.

Many accessibility considerations can be solved by offering alternative formats for media files. For example, text captions and alternative text for images or transcripts for video content.

W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) (www.w3.org/WAI) is a global initiative to establish guidelines, checklists and accessibility ratings. This website is the best place to get an up to date checklist of accessibility guidelines.

4.3.2 Usability Considerations

Usability is about making the digital assets we build easy and intuitive to use. To paraphrase Steve Krug, don't make your users think: they should just do.

Use **standard conventions**, such as links that are distinct (blue and underlined is standard), menus top or left and the logo in the top left hand corner. Search boxes are usually on the top of the page, and should use standard wording such as "search" on buttons. Keeping important elements familiar to web users means that they know immediately how to use them. Ensure as well that these elements (such as menus, logos, colours and layout) are kept consistent throughout the site. Important elements should be distinct, easy to find and consistent throughout the website.

The **information architecture** of a site is crucial to usability. Topics and categorisation should flow from broad to narrow, and should be built around users' needs and not company structure. An intuitively designed structure will guide the user to the site's goals.

The **sitemap** should be available from every page, and should clearly show the information architecture of the website. Dynamic sitemaps can be employed so that the sitemap is updated automatically as information is added to the website.

As well as carefully thought out information architecture, the **navigation** should guide users easily through both top-level and deeper pages. Navigation should also let the user know where they are in the site (especially as not all users arrive via the home page!). Breadcrumb links, clear page titles and URLs and menu changes all help to show the user where she is.

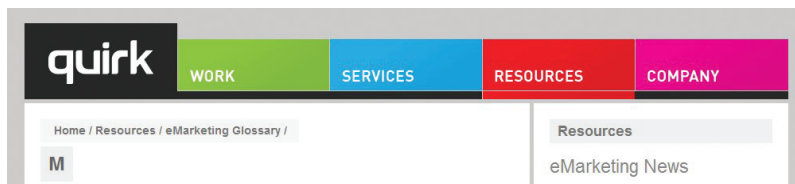


Figure 4.1 Quirk.biz uses breadcrumb links so that the user knows where they are in the website.

note

Common page elements are those elements which are on every page of the website. These can include main navigation, a search box, a link to the home page and sign up forms.

note

Just like in Hansel and Gretel, breadcrumbs help to show the user the path they have taken in the website. Unlike the fairy story, these ones shouldn't disappear as you navigate through the website.

Content needs to be written in such a way that enables users to grab the information they need in as little time as possible. Copy can be made more easily readable by:

- Highlighting or bolding key phrases and words
- Using bulleted lists
- Using paragraphs to break up information
- Using descriptive and distinct headings

On the page, use an inverted pyramid style, or newspaper style, for your copy. The bulk of the information should be at the top of the page, to make for easy scanning.

There are some key “don’ts” when it comes to building a user-friendly website:

- Never resize windows or launch the site in a pop-up.
- Don’t use splash pages (a page that site visitors first encounter before reaching the home page) .
- Never build a site entirely in Flash – most search engine spiders cannot even crawl Flash sites.
- Don’t distract users with “Christmas trees” (blinking images, flashing lights, automatic sound, scrolling text, unusual fonts, etc.).

Usability and accessibility guidelines are useful for checking that all elements have been dealt with. MIT Information Services and Technology provides a usability checklist online at:

<http://ist.mit.edu/services/consulting/usability/guidelines>

Navigation	Rating	Explanation for Rating
Current location within the site is shown clearly		
Link to the site’s main page is clearly identified		
Major/important parts of the site are directly accessible from the main page		
Sitemap is provided for a large, complex site		
Easy to use search function is provided, as needed		
Language and Content	Rating	Explanation for Rating
Important information and tasks are given prominence		

Information of low relevance or rarely used information is not included		
Related information or tasks are grouped: - on the same page or menu - in the same area within a page		
Language is simple, without jargon		
Paragraphs are brief		
Links are concise, expressive, and visible - not buried in text		
Terms are defined		
Architectural and Visual Clarity	Rating	Explanation for Rating
Site is organised from the user's perspective		
Site is easily scannable for organisation and meaning		
Site design and layout is straightforward and concise		
White space is sufficient; pages are not too dense		
Unnecessary animation is avoided		
Colours used for visited and unvisited links are easily seen and understood		

Figure 4.2 Some of the usability guidelines from the MIT checklist.

4.3.3 Search Engine Visibility

Search engine traffic is vital to a website; without it, chances are the site will never fulfil its marketing functions. It is essential that the search engines can see the entire publically visible website, index it fully and consider it relevant for its chosen keywords.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) has its own chapter in this textbook, but here are the key considerations when it comes to web development and design.

Labelling things correctly: URLs, Alt Tags, Title Tags and Meta Data

URLs, alt tags, title tags and meta data all describe a website and its pages to both search engine spiders and people, don't worry; these words are all described below! Chances are, clear descriptive use of these elements will appeal to both.

URLs

URLs indicate your location on the Web. URLs should be as brief and descriptive as possible. This may mean that URLs require server side rewriting so as to cope with dynamic parameters in URLs.

Clueless has the following URL:

www.clueless.com/index.html?action=prod&cat=4&prodid=28

Smart Pets has the following URL:

www.smartpets.com/products/collars/jewelled-collar

The second example is far more user friendly, and clearly indicates where in the site the user is. You even start getting a good idea of the architecture of the website from just one URL!

More than two dynamic parameters in a URL increase the risk that the URL may not be spidered. If not spidered the search engine would not even index the content on that page.

Lastly, well written URLs can make great anchor text. If another site is linking to yours and they use just the URL, the search engine will do a better job of knowing what the page is about if you have a descriptive URL.

Alt tags

Have you ever waited for a page to load, and seen little boxes of writing where the images should be? Sometimes they say things like "topimg.jpg", and sometimes they are much clearer and you have "Cocktails at sunset at Camps Bay".

Since search engines read text, not images, descriptive tags are the only way to tell them what the images are, but these are still essentially for users. Text readers for browsers will also read out these tags to tell the user what is there. Meaningful descriptions certainly sound a lot better than "image1", "image2", "image3".

Title attribute

Just as you can have the alt tag on an image, you can have a title attribute on almost any HTML element - most commonly on a link. This is the text seen when a user hovers over the element with their mouse pointer. It's used to describe the element, or what the link is about. As this is text, it will also be read by search engine spiders.

Title tags

Title tags which appear on the top bar of your browser, are used by search engines to determine the content of that page. They are also often used by

search engines as the link text on the search engines results page, therefore targeted title tags help to drive clickthrough rates. Title tags should be clear and concise. Title tags are also used when bookmarking a web page.

Figure 4.3 Meta Tags will determine what is displayed on the SERPs page under your website listing.

Meta tags

Meta tags are where the copywriter can fill in information about a web page. These tags are not normally seen by users. If you right click on a page in a browser and select “view source”, you should see a list of entries for **<meta name=**

```
<title>SearchStatus | Firefox SEO Toolbar Extension</title>
<meta name="description" content="Download SearchStatus, a fantastic new tool developed specifically for the specialised needs of search engine marketers." />
<meta name="keywords" content="searchstatus mozilla firefox information toolbar extension search google alexa queries page rank yahoo! msn links engine marketers" />
```

The second two lines are the meta data. In the past, the meta tags were used extensively by search engine spiders, but since so many people used this to try to manipulate search results, they are now less important. Meta data now act to provide context and relevancy rather than higher rankings. However, the meta tag called “description” often appears on the search engine results page (SERP) as the snippet of text to describe the web page being linked to. This is illustrated in the lines of code above. If the description is accurate, well-written and relevant to the searcher’s query, these descriptions are more likely to be used by the search engine. And if it meets all those criteria, it also means the link is more likely to be clicked on by the searcher. SEO is about doing as much as you can perfectly, which is why the meta is still important.

Search engine optimised copy

The *Writing for the Web* and *Search Engine Optimisation* chapters provide details on writing copy for online use and for SEO benefit. When it comes to web development, the copy that is shown on the web page needs to be kept separate from the code that tells the browser how to display the web page. This means that the search engine spider can easily discern what content is to be read (and hence scanned by the spider) and what are instructions to the browser. Cascading style sheets (CSS) can take care of that, and is covered further in this chapter.

note

If an XML file is used for the content in a Macromedia Flash File, then the content can be easily read by search engine spiders.

The following text styles cannot be indexed by search engines:

- Text embedded in a Java Applet or a Macromedia Flash File.
- Text in an image file (that's why you need descriptive alt tags and title attributes)
- Text only accessible after submitting a form, logging in, etc.

If the search engine cannot see the text on the page, it means that they cannot spider and index that page.

4.3.4 Social Sharing and Discoverability

Content (text, images, video and more) is increasingly shared via social media. Your website should be built for sharing, as much as your content is made to be shareable.

Many SEO considerations apply to ensuring that content is shareable:

- Have static, friendly URLs (i.e. don't make all new visitors go to the home page).
- Many social network sites, such as Facebook, will add your meta data to links that are shared. Ensure that these are useful and compelling to first time viewers by appealing to their interests.

You should also consider including the icons, called chiclets, of major social media platforms to encourage sharing.

4.4 planning – laying strong foundations

Planning a website starts with research: your market, your users, your competitors and your business. If you already have a website, you can use existing web analytics data to understand how well you are meeting your users' needs.

Key questions you need to ask include:

Business: *What are your business objectives? How should this digital asset help you to achieve those objectives? (e.g. Should it generate leads for you to follow up on? Is it an ecommerce store?)*

Users: *Who are your users, your potential customers? What problem does your website need to help them solve? (e.g. Collate travel information in one place, such as with www.tripit.com.)*

This research helps you to plan your website strategically, ensuring it is aligned with both user needs and business objectives. It's common to summarise your users with either pen portraits or personas to help you to test your website as it is developed.

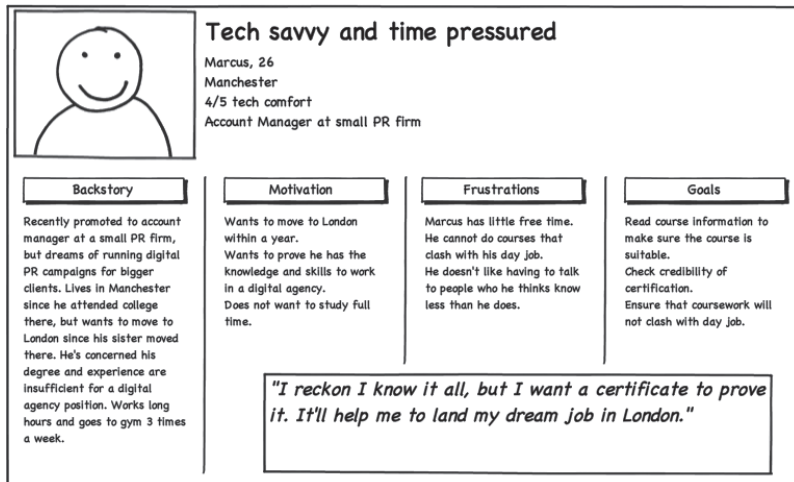


Figure 4.4 Example of a pen portrait.

In research and planning, you should also get to an understanding of what tasks (or actions) users need to do on your website. These are usually in line with your business objectives. Some tasks a user might need to do include checking the availability of a hotel, signing up to a newsletter, or printing information.

You also need to gather, analyse and map out what content is needed on the website. This content is then structured in a process called information architecture. This leads to sitemaps, reflecting the hierarchy of content on the website, and navigation, how users make their way through a website.



Figure 4.5 An example of a sitemap.

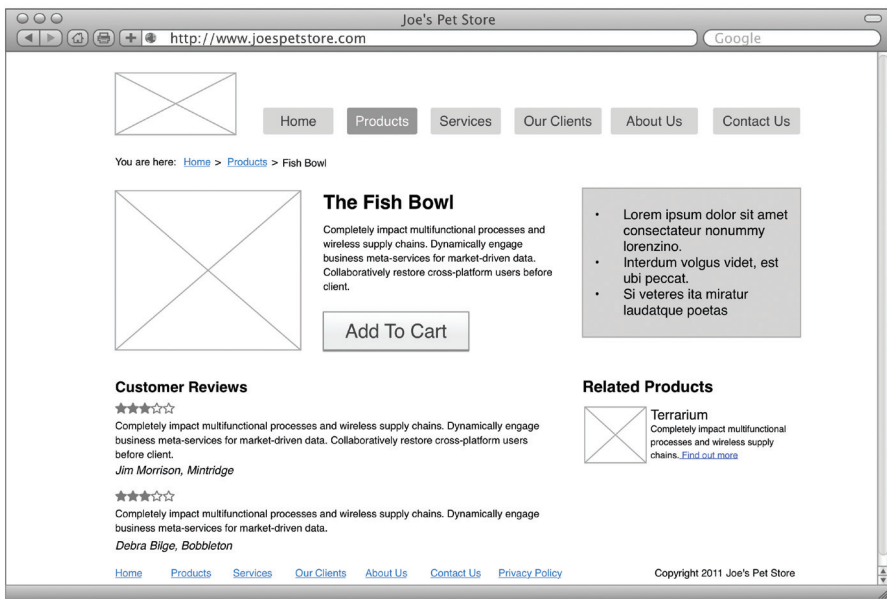


Figure 4.6 An example of a wireframe.

Before a website is designed and developed, it should be sketched out using wireframes. Wireframes are line drawings used to indicate types of content and navigation, creating a visual blueprint of the proposed website. These should then be reviewed by everyone involved in the web design and development project to make sure that they are feasible, as well as to identify new ideas or approaches for design and development. It's much easier to change track in the planning and research phase than down the line when design and development have started!

Using all the information compiled so far, a functional specification document is created. This document details the development requirements for the website, and can be used to communicate any specific design constraints.

It's now time to move on from planning to building.

4.5 designing

4.5.1 Visual Identity and Designing for Persuasion

The visual interface – the design of a website – is what the user sees and interacts with. It's the visual representation of all the hard work that goes into developing a website. It's what the site will be first judged by, and is the initial step in creating a delightful user experience. In case you haven't realised it, it matters a lot.

Design is not just about aesthetics, although looks are very important. Design is about the visual clues we give users so that they know what to do next. Design is the way we communicate with our users. Design is how we assure web visitors of our credibility and ability to answer their questions, and turn them into customers.

Good interface design involves many things (and years of training and experience), but a few basic considerations are:

- **Visual identity:** how users know it's you.
- **Navigation:** indicating to users where they are and where they can go.
- **Layout:** how content is structured and displayed.
- **Headers:** the usually consistent top part of a web page.
- **Footers:** as you might have guessed, the usually consistent bottom part of the page.
- **Credibility:** telling users that you are who you say you are.

visual identity

The entire interface is the visual identity of the site, but there are specific elements that help to define the visual identity of your website.

Usually the logo, often referred to as the Site ID, is a prominent way to reinforce whose site it is. The logo is part of a brand's corporate identity (CI) and often informs the colour palette of the website and other communications. Be aware that logos designed for printing on letterheads will need to be adapted for the web, particularly when it comes to resizing.



Figure 4.7 The navigation and buttons on Capitec's website clearly illustrate their brand identity – simple to navigate and visually appealing.

The visual identity is reinforced in the fonts used on the website. Often, a particular font is chosen for prominent headings on the site, while copy is in a standard, simpler font.

Menu and button style, as well as icons, are also part of a site's visual identity. Even when a user is viewing a small part of a site or page, it should look like it belongs to the site as whole.

navigation best practice

Navigation is not just about menus. Navigation is the signposting we use to help users orientate themselves in a website. No matter what site (a news site or an eCommerce site, a social networking site or a corporate brochure site), navigation matters.

Successful navigation should help a user answer four basic questions:

1. Where am I?

Here, the logo should tell the user what site they are on. Menu changes, breadcrumbs and page titles tell a user where in the site they are.

2. How did I get here?

Again, breadcrumb navigation often indicates the general path a user may have taken. In the case of site search, the keyword used should be indicated on the results page.

3. Where can I go next?

Navigation clues let a user know where to go to next. It may be an action on an eCommerce site like “add to cart”, it might be a contextual link indicating “click here to read more”. The key is making the options clear to the user.

4. How do I get home?

It's become standard that the logo of the website takes the user back to the home page, but many users still look in the main menu for the word “home”. Make sure that they can get back to the beginning quickly and easily.

layout considerations

As people are spending more and more time on the web, they are less tolerant of websites that don't look good. While a website is not an art project, it is a design project, and the fundamentals of good design apply.

Balance is important, especially when web pages have so much information and content to display. Often, a grid approach helps to design sites with a sense of balance and proportion. There are many templates available to budding designers to assist with this, including the 960 Grid System (www.960.gs).

When choosing the colour palette for the website, be aware of legibility and accessibility concerns. Using a lot of open or white space often makes sites appear simple and easy to read.

headers

It is usually the top area of a website that is used the most to communicate. It tends to set the identity of the website, usually by having a prominent logo of the organisation, and it tends to house common top level navigation and functionality items such as site search.

While the header needs to be prominent in establishing identity, it also shouldn't push additional content too far down the page. This is definitely an area where simplicity is important.

footers

A website footer is, as the name implies, the section at the bottom of any web page. It is usually the same throughout a website.

While the footer is usually the place to put important but infrequently used links (such as Terms and Conditions or the site's privacy policy), the trend today is to also use this space to include links to major parts of a website. This means that even when a user scrolls down a page, they won't have to scroll back to the top to navigate further. They can just follow links in the footer.

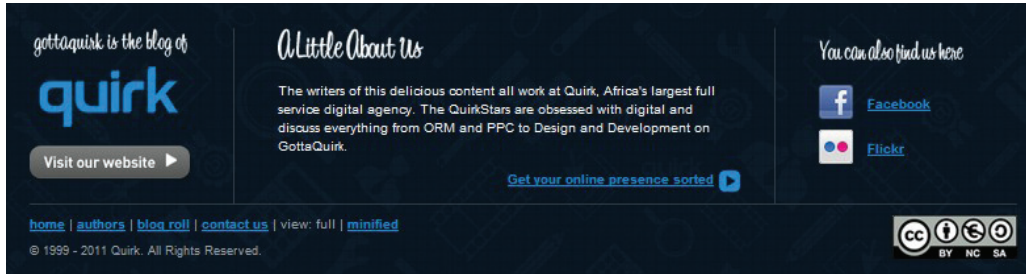


Figure 4.8 An example of the footer from GottaQuirk.com.

Credibility considerations

Here are some of the cues that visitors use to determine the credibility of a website:

- **Looks** – does it look professional and beautiful?
- **Prominent phone numbers and addresses above the fold** – it assures the visitor that there is a real person behind the website, and that they are in easy reach.
- **Informative, and personal, “about us”** - your customers want to see the inner workings of a company and are especially interested in learning more about the head honchos. Include employee pictures and/or profiles. It puts a face to an organisation.
- **Feature genuine testimonials on each page** – this is a great way to show potential customers what your current customers have to say about your organisation. Trust is vital and this is one way to encourage it.
- **Feature logos of associations / awards** - if you belong to any relevant industry associations or have won any awards, feature them. Not only does this go a long way in establishing your credibility, but it will show that you're at the top of your game, a notch above the competition.
- **Link to credible third party references** - this is a way to assert your credibility without tooting your own horn.
- **Keep content fresh and updated** – a news section that was last updated a year ago implies that nothing has happened since.
- **Ensure that your site is free of errors** – spelling and grammar mistakes are exceptionally unprofessional and while the large majority of readers may not pick them up, the one or two who do will question your credibility.

4.6 developing – technology gives it life

If planning the site gives it structure and a skeleton, and designing gives it an interface or skin, the technology is what gives it life.

Development and technology has implications for the way your site functions, how usable and accessible it is, as well as implications for SEO. Development covers both the back end of a site (the real nuts and bolts of what is being delivered) and the front end (developing for the interface that has been designed).

We'll cover some of the main considerations you should be aware of when building a site:

- **Managing content**
- **Interactive interfaces**
- **Search and usability considerations**

Managing content: using a CMS

CMS stands for Content Management System. As the name implies, a CMS is used to manage the content of a website. If a site is updated frequently and if people other than web developers need to update the content of a website, a CMS is used. Today, many sites are built on a CMS. The CMS can also allow content of a website to be updated from any location in the world.

note

Proprietary vs. open source: an important consideration when building a new site, and all avenues should be explored. Open source software is fully customisable and benefits from a large developer community. Proprietary software usually includes support in its total price.

The screenshot shows the Capitec Bank website's back-end CMS interface. At the top, the Capitec Bank logo is on the left, and a user greeting 'Welcome Jean du Plessis' with 'Log out' and 'Change password' links is on the right. A navigation menu includes 'Dashboard', 'Users', 'Common' (highlighted), 'About Us', 'Personal Banking', 'Business Services', 'Money Management', 'Media Centre', and 'Contacts'. Below the menu, the breadcrumb 'You are here: Common > Branches' is visible. The main content area features a 'Branches' section with a 'New Branch' button and a 'Download Branch CSV (all branches)' button. There are filters for 'City' (All Cities), 'Province' (All Provinces), and 'Status' (All Statuses). Sorting options include 'Sort by Code', 'Sort order Ascending', and 'Records per page 10'. A 'Reset' and 'Apply filter' button are also present. The main data is presented in a table with columns: Code, Branch Name, City, Post code, Province, Hours, Status, and Actions. The table lists 11 branches, including Goodwood Mall, Paarl, Parow Voortrekker, Wynberg, Germiston Golden Walk Shop 77, Kwaggafontein Plaza, Ga-Rankuwa, Tzaneen Mall, Cape Town Golden Acre, and Nelspruit Plaza. Each row has a 'Status' column with a checked box and an 'Active' label, and an 'Actions' column with three icons (edit, delete, refresh). At the bottom, a pagination bar shows 'Page 1 of 46' and a list of page numbers from 1 to 10, followed by 'Next'.

Code	Branch Name	City	Post code	Province	Hours	Status	Actions
2002	Goodwood Mall	Goodwood	7460	Western Cape		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2003	Paarl	Paarl	7646	Western Cape		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2004	Parow Voortrekker	Parow	7501	Western Cape		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2005	Wynberg	Wynberg	7800	Western Cape		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2006	Germiston Golden Walk Shop 77	Germiston	1400	Gauteng		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2007	Kwaggafontein Plaza	Kwaggafontein	1033	Mpumalanga		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2008	Ga-Rankuwa	Ga-Rankuwa	208	North West		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2009	Tzaneen Mall	Tzaneen	850	Limpopo		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2010	Cape Town Golden Acre	Cape Town	8001	Western Cape		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]
2011	Nelspruit Plaza	Nelspruit	1200	Mpumalanga		☑ Active	[edit] [delete] [refresh]

Figure 4.9 Above you can see Capitec's proprietary CMS.

A CMS can be built specifically for a website, and many web development companies build their own CMS which can be used by their clients. A CMS can also be bought pre-built, and there are many open source pre-built CMSs available, some of which are free.

Some widely used CMSs include:

- WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
- Joomla (www.joomla.org)
- Drupal (www.drupal.com)
- Expression Engine (www.expressionengine.com)

A CMS should be selected with the goals and functions of the website in mind. A CMS needs to be able to scale along with the website and business that it supports, and not the other way round!

Of course, the CMS selected should result in a website that is search engine friendly. Here are some key features to look out for when selecting or building a CMS:

- **Meta and title tag customisation:** the CMS should allow you to enter your own meta tags for each page, as well as allow full customisation of title tags for each page.
- **HTML tag customisation:** the CMS should allow for full customisation of title tags, such as nofollow links.
- **URLs:** instead of using dynamic parameters, the CMS should allow for server-side rewriting of URLs. It should allow for the creation of URLs that are:
 - o static
 - o rewritable
 - o keyword rich
- **Customisable navigation:** a good CMS will allow flexibility when it comes to creating the information architecture for a website. For the purposes of adding additional content for search engines, a CMS should not require that all content pages be linked to from the home page navigation. This allows content to be added for SEO purposes, without adding it to the main navigation.
- **301 redirect functionality:** it is imperative that a CMS offers the ability to put in place 301 redirects to prevent penalisation for duplicate content on different URLs.
- **Customisable image naming and alt tags for images:** a good CMS will allow you to create custom alt tags and title attributes.
- **Robots.txt management:** ensure you are able to customise the robots.txt to your needs, or that this can at least be managed using the meta tags.

note

See the chapter on *Search Engine Optimisation* for an explanation of nofollow links.

Be careful when building clean, descriptive and dynamic URLs from CMS content. Should you use a news heading (“Storm” in this example) as part of your URL (<http://www.websitename.com/cape/storm>) and someone changes the heading to “Tornado” (<http://www.site.com/cape/tornado>), this will alter the URL and the search engines will index this as a new page, but with the same content as the URL which had the old heading. Bear this in mind before adding dynamic parameters to your URLs.

Finally, using a CMS that supports standards compliant HTML and CSS is very important, as without it, inconsistencies may be rendered across various browsers. It also ensures faster loading time and reduced bandwidth, makes mark-up easier to maintain, supports SEO efforts and ensures that every single visitor to a website, no matter what browser they are using, will be able to see everything on the website.

Interactive interfaces

Web users have come to expect rich, interactive experiences online, and interactive website interfaces are a part of that.

These rich, interactive experiences range from simple animations through to highly responsive interfaces requiring input from the user. There are a range of technologies available to create such experiences, each with its own opportunities and challenges.

- **Adobe Flash** is a widespread approach for creating rich, interactive experiences. It supports video, and is often used to create game-like web experiences. Although widely supported by desktop browsers, it has limited support on mobile devices and at the time of writing is not supported by Apple mobile devices (iPhone and iPad). This means that Flash content cannot be accessed by all smartphone users. It has a history of being problematic for search engine optimisation, though there are ways to work around this.
- **Microsoft Silverlight** is a competitor to Adobe Flash. It is not as widely supported as Adobe Flash.
- **HTML5, with CSS3 and JavaScript** is the next version of HTML standard with improved support for interactive media. It should be compatible across more devices and browsers, and is more suitable to search engine optimisation. This is likely to be the future solution.



What is HTML 5?

HTML 5 is the latest evolution of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML 5)

HTML is a standard format or language for creating websites and HTML5 is the fifth iteration of that standard. It's a specification

published by the web standards body, W3C, describing what features are available and how to use them. HTML5 is different from proprietary web software such as Adobe Flash or Microsoft Silverlight in that the specification is the result of contributions from many organisations, and can be implemented by anyone without having to pay for royalties or licensing fees.

The last version of HTML, HTML4, was published back in 1997 - and a lot has changed since then! HTML5 has improved the semantic capabilities of the language, so text is marked up as to its intent (header, footer, article and so on) rather than its appearance on the page, as often happened in the past. This is better when repurposing the text, for example for screen-readers and it's easier for search engine robots and other software to understand.

HTML5 also simplifies many common tasks when building a web page, such as including multimedia content, validating forms, caching information and capturing data such as date and time.

Of particular interest are the features that bring multimedia capabilities. HTML5 allows browsers for the first time to play video and audio content without the use of Flash or a similar plug-in. There is also a feature called Canvas, which allows designers to draw on the web page, creating rich interactive experiences without the normal constraints that apply to laying out text in a web page.

HTML5 video is essentially a standard that browsers can implement to display video on a web page. Currently, the task of displaying video generally falls to a Flash player. With Flash, Adobe has really pushed the boundaries on displaying video on the web, but it can't be good for one vendor to control such an important delivery mechanism forever. Essentially, HTML5 will mean that your browser will play video natively, and you won't have to visit Adobe to get Flash first. YouTube has for some time offered an HTML5 version of its videos, and it's likely this approach will become commonplace as the standard matures.

The goal is a web that just works, without the need for particular browsers or plug-ins to enable certain functionality. To this end, having a standardised way of implementing common features means that the web is open and accessible to all, regardless of competency. The semantic web, in particular, is important in that it will help search engines and other services to work better, allowing content to be more readily accessible and easier to interact with.

4.6.1 SEO and Usability Considerations

As a whole technology should only act as an enabler. It should never be a site's main focus. Here are some technical considerations vital to a good website:

URL rewriting: it is vital that important URLs in your site are indexable by the search engines. Ensure that URL rewriting is enabled according to the guidelines in this chapter. URL rewriting should be able to handle extra dynamic parameters that might be added by search engines for tracking purposes.

GZIP compression: this helps to speed up the download times of a web page, improving user experience.

Server-side form validation: form validation is the process whereby the data entered into a form is verified in order to meet certain preset conditions (e.g. ensuring that the name and email address fields are filled in).

Client-side validation relies on JavaScript, which is not necessarily available to all visitors. Client-side validation can alert a visitor to an incorrectly filled in form most quickly, but server-side validation is the most accurate. It is also important to have a tool to collect all of the failed tests and present appropriate error messages neatly above the form the user is trying to complete. This will ensure that all correctly entered data is not lost, but repopulated in the form to save time and reduce frustration.

International character support: the Internet has afforded the opportunity to conduct business globally, but this means that websites need to make provision for non-English visitors. It is advisable to support international characters via UTF-8 encoding; both on the website itself and in the form data submitted to it.

Search-friendly sessions: sessions can be used to recognise individual visitors on a website, useful for click-path analysis. Cookies can be used to maintain sessions, but URL rewriting can be used to compensate for users who do not have cookies activated. This means that as visitors move through a website, their session information is stored in a dynamically generated web address.

Search engine spiders do not support cookies, so many websites will attempt URL rewriting to maintain the session as the spider crawls the website. However, these URLs are not liked by search engine spiders (as they appear to create a moving target for the robot) and can hinder crawling and indexing. The work-around: use technology to detect if a visitor to the site is a person or a robot, and do not rewrite URLs for the search engine robots.

discussion

Why does URL rewriting create a moving target for a search engine spider?

Auto generated human readable and XML sitemaps: sitemaps are exceptionally important, both to visitors and to search engines. Technology can be implemented that automatically generates and updates both the human readable and XML sitemaps, ensuring spiders can find new content.

RSS feed generation: Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is an absolute necessity. With all the millions of web and blog sites in existence web users can no longer afford to spend time browsing their favourite sites to see if new content has been added. By enabling RSS feeds on certain sections on the site, especially those that are frequently updated, users will have the content delivered directly to them. This is also important for search engines. Visitors should be able to pick and choose the sections they like to get updates from via a feed.

4.7 launch

Having planned an amazing site, designed it beautifully, built it skilfully and filled it with fantastic copy, it's time to test it fully and then take it live!

Testing is an important part of website development and design, and it should take place throughout the process of planning, designing and building, leaving just final quality assurance (QA) testing before the site goes live.

The site needs to be tested in all common browsers to make sure that it looks and works as it should across all those browsers. All links should be tested to make sure that they work correctly, and it's always a good idea to get a final check of all the copy before it goes live.

Tools like W3C's HTML validator (validator.w3.org) should be used to validate your HTML.

Make sure your web analytics tracking tags are in place, after which it will be time to take your site live! Now, you need to move on to driving traffic to your newly launched site.

4.8 summary

Successful websites come from strong planning with a focus on user needs. Websites should be built to be accessible and usable, search engine optimised and shareable, and should look professional.

Key considerations include:

- Well thought out information architecture and clear navigation.
- Standards compliant HTML and functionality that works across all browsers.
- Descriptive naming of elements so that websites make sense without images and when accessed by text reading browsers.

Design should enhance user experience and guide a visitor seamlessly through a website, as opposed to distracting visitors from their goals.

4.9 the bigger picture

Web development and design can be seen as the thread that holds digital marketing together. After all, websites are the first thing we think of when we think of all things “Internet”!

Whatever campaign is being run, there is no doubt that it will involve a website. The fundamentals of website development and design, particularly designing for users first and foremost, should form the foundation of any campaign.

With the crucial role that search engines play in the way that people access the Internet and visit websites, web development and design goes hand in hand with SEO. And of course, campaigns such as PPC campaigns, email marketing campaigns and even affiliate campaigns often require custom landing pages. That’s the web design jumping into the mix again.

Website owners want their website to be talked about, and linked to, for all the right reasons. Sometimes the best way to know what parts of your website are and are not working is to listen to the online chatter. That’s ORM stepping into the mix.

Successful website development and design is all about foundations, and the resulting website usually forms the foundation of any digital marketing to follow. Make sure you understand your users’ needs, and you’re building on a strong base.

Almost all digital marketing is designed to get users to a website where they convert into customers, so web development really is at the centre of all your online marketing activities.

4.10 case study: Happy Cog and Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation

In 2010, the *Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation* (GPTMC), an organisation geared toward creating awareness around and promoting the city of Philadelphia in the United States, needed to refresh their website and general digital presence. The original website, created in 1997, had become a key marketing tool for the organisation but due to its outdated design, was facing some major problems:

- The design’s DNA did not encourage a high degree of engagement with content.
- Excessive navigation and a fragmented architecture meant users were often confused.
- There was no strategy for the social web.



Figure 4.10 The original website for the GPTMC which was hosted at www.gophila.com. It is now available as an archive: <http://archive.visitphilly.com/>

In order to create an engaging and user friendly site, Happy Cog, a US based digital agency, worked with the organisation to scrutinise data from both local and tourism sources.

They needed to change perceptions about what Philadelphia had to offer and celebrate its unique attributes. The website needed to:

- Be emotionally compelling.
- Encourage users to spend more time on the site to encourage them to book trips and spend money in Philadelphia.
- Become more credible.

This was not an easy task, but designers chose to create portraits of the city on the website to showcase some of its less commonly known sites and features. They adopted a visual approach to the website and through this, aimed at enhancing the sites ability to engage users. Through this design concept, they also hoped to assist users in planning their trips.

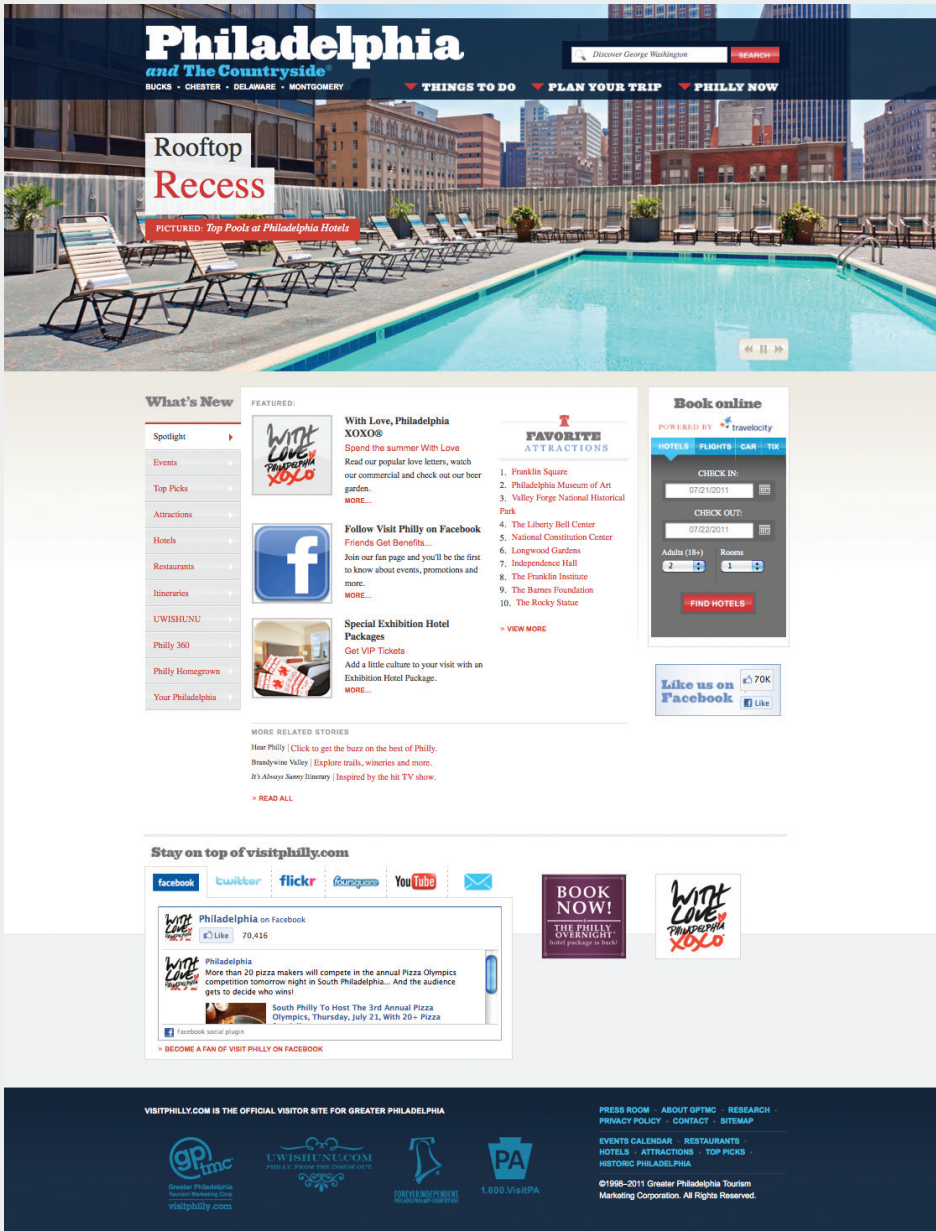


Figure 4.11 The new GPTMC website <http://www.visitphilly.com/>

To fix the navigational issues on the site, the decision was made to simplify the number of choices for the user. Three basic critical processes were identified that the architecture needed to support:

- **Selecting a destination.**
- **Building an itinerary.**
- **Obtaining detailed information about the city.**

They also needed to fix the management of the site. Originally the back-end of the site was managed through a variety of tools which did not integrate well. These were made up of custom publishing solutions and blogging tools.

GPMTTC has many custom publishing needs and during the course of the project, Happy Cog realised they needed to find one comprehensive content management solution to successfully handle all of the sites requirements.

They decided on ExpressionEngine (EE) as a platform for the project since this enabled authors with varying levels of technical skill to get to work immediately. This was a pivotal requirement since GPTMC needed to migrate hundreds of entries from a legacy MS SQL/XHTML publishing platform to a MySQL/Textile system manually. It also meant that Happy Cog's developers were able to code XHTML with real-life website copy and not worry that real copy would break the layout after coding was complete.

At the same time, the Happy Cog team was able to:

- **Distribute their development workload due to a well documented templating language.**
- **Work on the front-end and back-end concurrently to code pages.**
- **Hook up basic site functionality while working on front-end XHTML development.**
- **Free their back-end developers to focus on coding custom functionality.**
- **Develop front-end JavaScript slideshows that can be customised and edited.**

Another major change was the URL. From <http://www.gophila.com> it was changed to <http://www.visitphilly.com/>. This meant implications for the search engine visibility of the site. To combat this, the team worked together with SEO organisation, *Seer Interactive*, to implement a 301 redirect tool which allows GPTMC to specify routes and make sure the search ranking are not negatively affected.

(Adapted from happycog.com, 2010)

case study questions

1. What role did navigation and usability play in the redesign of the website?
2. Why was the addition of social layers important in the redesign?
3. Why did the developers decide to consolidate the content management platforms?

chapter questions

1. What is an XML sitemap?
2. Which is more important in web design – functionality or look and feel?
3. What role does a website play in an overall digital marketing strategy?

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New Riders, Berkeley

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New Riders, Berkeley

further reading

- Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think!* and Jeffrey Zeldman's *Designing with Web Standards* will make you look at websites and web design in a completely different way, and both will give you a solid background in building websites that work.
- www.alistapart.com – a website for people that make websites, A List Apart has regular articles from web designers and developers on building user friendly, standards compliant websites.
- www.smashingmagazine.com – Smashing Magazine posts regular in depth articles focused on design.

What's inside: An **introduction to online copywriting** reveals that content is king, and gives you the **key terms and concepts** needed for this chapter. **How it works** discusses **personas** and the importance of **layout** and some **HTML basics**. Writing online, you will need to look at **short copy**, which includes the all important **Call to Action**, features and benefits, and writing **PPC adverts**. **Long copy** still requires attention to the elements that make sure you are **read**, and we look at the all important **SEO copywriting**. The web is full of **neologisms and buzz words**, but you'll keep on top of them with our **tools of the trade**.

5.1 introduction

Online copy is a hardworking multi-tasker. It must provide information to visitors, engage with them, convince them to take a desired action and all the while, convey brand ethos. It also has to provide context and relevance to search engines. All this it needs to achieve, without appearing to be trying too hard.

You will see in this chapter that writing for the web is different to writing for more traditional media. Secondly, when it comes to the Internet, content is king! Many people argue that it is one of the most significant determinants of the success of your online campaigns. Considering it is one of the most direct lines of communication with your consumers, this is not surprising.

Online copywriting involves everything from the copy of a website, to the content of an email and all things in between. From WebPR articles of 800 words to three line PPC adverts, if it's being read on a screen, it's online copy.

Writing for the web does not mean the traditional rules of writing need to be abandoned. By and large, the foundations remain.

In this chapter, we're going to look at the basic principles you need to know when writing for the web. We cover knowing your audience and understanding HTML. We introduce the concept of keywords and writing for search engine optimisation (SEO), look at the types of web copy that you can use and finally, we outline the best practices for successful online copywriting.

5.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Above the fold	The content that appears on a screen without a user having to scroll.
Active verb	A word that conveys action or behaviour, and in a Call to Action, tells a reader what to do.
Benefit	The positive outcome for a user that a feature provides.
Call to Action (CTA)	Words used to encourage a prospect to take a particular action.
Dynamic keyword insertion	In paid search advertising, this allows keywords used in searches to be inserted automatically into advert copy.
Feature	A prominent aspect of a product which is beneficial to users.

Mass customisation	Tailoring content for many individuals.
Persona	A character used to define a group of users to a website.
Pay Per Click (PPC)	Pay Per Click usually refers to advertising on search engines.
Sender alias	The name that is chosen to appear in the sender or from field of an email.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	Aims to improve rankings in search engines.
Search engine results page (SERP)	What you see when you perform a search on a search engine.
Unique selling point (USP)	This is what makes your offering different to your competitors'.

5.3 how it works

5.3.1 Know Your Audience

One of the assumptions one can usually make about writing is that it is done for an audience. In marketing and advertising, knowing your audience is vital.

It will guide you in your content strategy, determining the topics they want, and help you organise information in such a way that makes sense to them. It will direct the tone of your copy. Ultimately, understanding who you are writing for will ensure you are more able to communicate your message to them and thus increase the likelihood that your copy will achieve the desired result.

Step one of writing for the web is to ensure you have researched your audience and understand what they want. Once you have a clear idea about this, you can figure out how to fulfil those needs using your copy.

Holly Buchanan of “Future Now” summarises this with three questions you should ask:

1. **Who is my audience?**
2. **What actions do I want them to take?**
3. **What information do they need in order to feel confident taking action?**

tip

Sometimes it helps to write for just one person. Pick out someone you know who fits your audience, or make someone up, and write for that person. In copywriting, this person who fits your audience is a persona.

When you are researching your audience, there are two useful concepts to bear in mind: the audience of one and personas.

5.3.2 The Audience of One

According to Price and Price, audiences were traditionally thought of as a vast and vaguely defined crowd (2002). Because the web provides a voice to individuals and niche groups, the concept of this mass audience is disintegrating.

Price and Price go on to argue that the Internet has led to an audience of one (2002). What does this mean? While your audience is not literally one person (and if it is, thank your mum for reading your website, but spend some time on growing your readership), it is not a vast, vaguely defined crowd. Instead, online we have many niche audiences who are used to being addressed as individuals.

When you are writing marketing material, you need to identify that individual, investigate what they want and write as if you were speaking directly to them. The individual that you have in mind when you are writing could also be called a persona.

5.3.3 Personas

A persona is a profile that a writer creates to embody the characteristics of the target audience for whom she is writing.

Personas are based on the profile of readers of your copy. Creating a profile is all about considering the characteristics of your readers and their needs and desires. When you are building this profile, there are a number of things that you should consider about your audience:

- Are they primarily male, female or a mixture?
- What are their other demographics?

Once you understand these simple characteristics, you can ask yourself a few, more in-depth questions. If you are selling something, questions include:

- How do they make purchasing decisions?
- Do they compare many service providers before selecting one?
- Do they make lists of questions and call in for assistance with decision making or do they make purchase decisions spontaneously based on a special offer?

Understanding the reader profiles of your readers is an important process, and the best copy usually results from extensive time spent figuring out your audience.

Tailoring your copy to your audience does not necessarily limit you to one persona. Digital copy can be structured in such a way that it caters for several personas. However, you need to spend time understanding their needs before you are able to write copy that addresses these needs.

5.4 HTML

HTML stands for HyperText Markup Language, and it's the foundation of documents on the web. HTML tags tell browsers how to present content. HTML tags are in the brackets that look like arrows: < >

A good digital copywriter will also be able to use basic HTML to layout copy, knowing that it is the appearance of the page that will get his words read. It should be easy for users to skip and skim the copy, and it should be easy for them to find the parts that are most relevant to them.

When writing online copy, you can use an HTML editor, where you insert the tags yourself, or a What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editor which works in a similar way to a word processor.

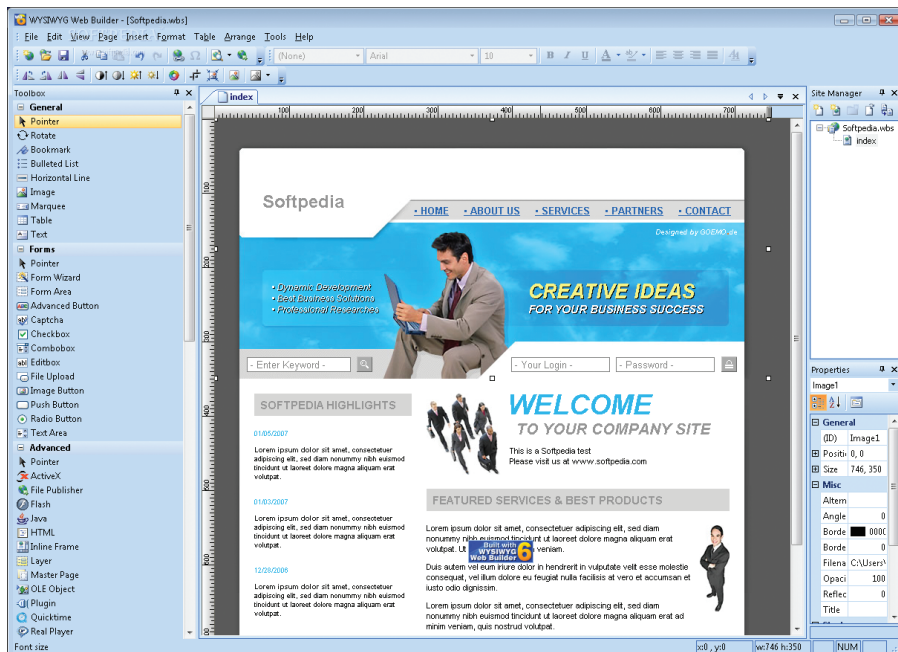


Figure 5.1 An example of a WYSIWYG editor. WYSIWYG Builder 6.5.1

Basic HTML is not hard to use, and will help you layout your content. Here are some basic HTML tags:

- **To bold:** `phrase you wish to bold`
- **To italicise:** `phrase you wish to italicise`
- **To underline:** `<u>phrase you wish to underline</u>`
- **To list:** `lines you wish to list`
- **To create a paragraph:** `<p>paragraph text</p>`
- **To insert a line break:** `
`
- **To insert a link:** `phrase you wish to link`

The tags also help search engines identify how the content has been laid out on the page.

The best way to get to grips with HTML is to start using it online, where you can see how the tags work.

5.5 an introduction to key phrases

One of the most notable differences between writing for print and writing for the web is when it comes to the latter, you are writing not only for an audience, but also for the search engines. While your human audience should always be your first priority, your copy also needs to speak to the search engines in a language they can understand. This digital tactic will be covered in greater depth in the chapter *Search Engine Optimisation*.

note

Search engines trawl and read the content on your website using spiders.

Not the creepy crawly kind, the clever little bit of code kind. Read more about how this works in the *Search Engine Optimisation* chapter.

Optimising your copy for search engines is important because your target audience is likely to be using a search engine to try and find the products or services you are offering. If the search engine is not aware your content can give its users the answers they are looking for on a particular subject, then it won't send traffic to your website. Without traffic, you can have all of the juicy, useful content in the world and it's not going to meet your marketing objectives. Optimising your content for search is thus the process of communicating to search engines the content you are publishing. The use of keywords and phrases is an integral part of this.

5.5.1 Key Phrases

A keyword refers to the word used in a search query and a key phrase refers to more than one word used in the search query.

Keyphrase research is an important element of digital copywriting. Having identified the themes of your web pages, keyword research should be used to identify what phrases your target audience uses when searching for you. It is

important to know what people are searching for, so that you can give them what they need.

Once you have a good idea of the words people are using to find information online, you can use these phrases in your copy as a signal to search engines that your content is relevant to their users.

A good copywriter is able to weave a predetermined set of key phrases into a piece of copy seamlessly, so that the reader cannot detect that they have been included.

Each page should be optimised for a primary key phrase, and can be optimised for a secondary and tertiary key phrase as well. Usually a web page is optimised for three key phrases, but can be optimised for up to five (though only if the page is very long). Any more than that and you are better off creating new, niche web pages.

Key phrases can be integrated into nearly every type of content that you write for the web.

note

In the chapter called *Search Engine Optimisation*, there is more detail on the process of keyword discovery and keyword selection.

5.6 types of web copy

Whether it is long or short, the purpose of content is to communicate a message. By its nature, communication implies both that the message has been received and understood. The considerations covered here are aimed at ensuring that when you distribute a message, it is communicated effectively to the people who need to receive it.

In order to communicate the intended message effectively, content needs to be

- Clear and concise
- Easy to read
- Well-written
- Well-structured

Content written for the web can be divided into two broad categories, short copy and long copy. The division is by no means scientific.

5.6.1 Long Copy

The title, 'long copy' is somewhat misleading. As online readers behave slightly differently to offline readers, it is unlikely that a skilled copywriter will be called on to create copy for the web that is longer than 800 or 1 000 words per page. Of course, there are exceptions to this.

That is not to say that online copywriting is just about short, sharp Call to Action copy that we will discuss in the next section. However web users do tend to scan pages quickly to determine whether or not they will read further. Specifically in longer copy, you need to take this into consideration.

Longer copy does have advantages. Primarily, it allows you to provide more information and encourage the reader to convert. You can foster a relationship with a reader, whether it is on a blog, through email communications or through articles and news releases. With more words and space available to use, you are able to build a voice and a personality into your writing.

There are many types of long online copy. Here, we will focus on a few that are useful for marketing:

- **News releases**
- **Articles for online syndication**
- **Emails**
- **Blog posts**

Bear in mind that this is by no means an exhaustive list.

News Releases

The news release is a stalwart of public relations. As the Internet grows, so does the overlap between PR and Marketing. As a result, many copywriters are called upon to write news releases for online distribution as it is a standardised format for releasing information. Originally intended to provide information for journalists, news releases are increasingly being read without going through the journalists first.

The screenshot shows the Bizcommunity.com website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'SUBSCRIBE', 'SUBMIT NEWS', 'CONTACT US', 'ADVERTISE & RATES', 'TRANSLATE', and 'SOUTH AFRICA'. The main header includes the Bizcommunity.com logo and a search bar. Below the header is a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'My Biz', 'News', 'Contributors', 'Community', 'People', 'Companies', 'Jobs', 'Blogs', 'Events', 'Galleries', 'Showcases', and 'Lifestyle'. The main content area is titled 'Digital company news' and features a news release from Quirk Education. The release is dated 15 Mar 2011 11:51 and includes a 'Submit a comment' link. The text of the release describes Quirk Education's donation to the Southern Africa Sustainable Development Initiative (SASDI) and mentions that eight University of Cape Town students have enrolled in their Quirk Certificate Course in eMarketing. Below the main text, there is a 'Community activity' section with user profiles and recent posts.

Figure 5.2 A news release on Bizcommunity.com

Articles for Online Syndication

Online article syndication involves writing articles that are in no way a direct promotion of your site. In other words, they are not press releases. These articles are written to provide information and valuable content to readers about something which is indirectly related to your product or service.

Articles are submitted to online article directories, from where they are picked up and republished on other sites.

As the articles contain links and key phrases relevant to your site, the benefits for SEO are excellent. But the strategy won't work unless people want to read your articles - so they need to be broad, informative and not just thinly disguised adverts. You are aiming to inform your audience, position your brand as experts in your field and demonstrate authority and thought leadership.

There are a few key steps to writing an article for syndication.

Step 1: Choosing your Topic

By looking at your website's content themes and key phrases associated with them, you will be able to write targeted, key phrase rich articles. Listening to the conversations around your brand, and seeing what customers are saying, can also lead you to topics relevant to your website and your customers.

Step 2: Write about it

Bear in mind the primary goal of your content is to be informative and valuable to your readers. The secondary goals are the promotion of the brand you're representing and search engine ranking benefit you get from publishing content online. These are all things that should be considered when you are planning the material for your article. In addition, it not only has to be in keeping with the brand for whom you are writing, but it also has to be written using a style and form that is engaging to users. Following the best practice guidelines discussed in the next part of this chapter will go a long way toward ensuring that you get this right.

Steps 3 and 4, relate to distribution, and will be covered in-depth in the chapter WebPR.

Step 3: Get the article out there

Publishing the articles to directories means they can be picked up and republished on other sites, which contributes significantly to linkbuilding efforts. There are hundreds of online article directories out there but you need to be selective when choosing which ones to submit to. The good article directories usually allow up to four links to be placed in each article, which allows you flexibility in terms of linking back to your site but doesn't make the article seem like spam.

note

If a chocolatier wrote an article on the benefits of eating dark chocolate, without directly promoting their own product, this would be an example of an article written for online syndication.

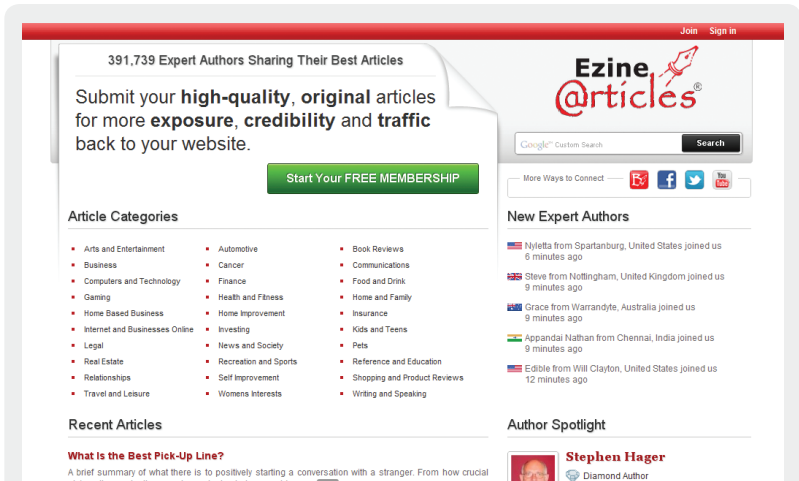


Figure 5.3 Ezine Articles is an example of an online article directory.

From here people who are interested in republishing the article on their own sites/blogs can do so as long as they reproduce the content exactly as you have submitted it. If the article is well-written and informative it has the capacity to go viral. This is the ultimate goal as the more times it is republished the more links you will acquire – and all at no cost to you.

Step 4: Monitor its progress

A bit of basic online reputation monitoring will enable you to keep an eye on where your article is being republished and that it is being republished correctly.

Emails


Email marketing is an integral part of many marketing strategies. Of course, content is a huge part of this: it is the words in an email that a user engages with.

By virtue of their nature, emails are the ideal medium for communicating with your consumers and building relationships with them.

Successful email campaigns provide value to their readers. This value can vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer:

- Humour
- Research
- Information
- Promotions

It's Wednesday. That means it's time for Quirk's Fortnightly Newsletter.
Did your email system mangle this newsletter? [Click here to see it online.](#)




Issue 184 | 20 April 2011

Quirk's Growing Fast & We're Looking For Great People

Cape Town:

- Account Director
- Senior Account Manager
- Management Accountant
- Mid-Level Project Manager
- Social Media Manager
- Data Analyst
- Middleweight Java Developer/
Software Engineer
- Senior Designer
- Middleweight Designer
- Designer
- Senior PPC Campaign
Manager
- Mid-Level PPC Campaign
Manager
- German Speaking PPC
Campaign Manager
- SEO Practitioner

Hello Jason



Call me passé, but I love Email Marketing. It's where my digital marketing journey began 12 years ago and although many other tactics seem sexier these days, a well-executed Email Marketing strategy **rarely fails to deliver.**

I love how email **builds relationships...** real ones. We have many readers that reply to our newsletters - sometimes it's just to say hi, sometimes it's to share some wisdom, but we really do feel like we're having a **real conversation with 15 000 people.**

I wanted to find a way to give away a couple of our new "geek chic" **HTML5 t-shirts** today. If you want one, tweet your best Email Marketing tip to [@quirkagency](#). If it makes the cut, we'll send you a little present.

Manners has put together a top notch newsletter for you today

Figure 5.4 Quirk's newsletter, packed with useful information, goes out fortnightly.

Blog Posts and Blogging

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They're an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand, and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback on developments. This is an audience made up of players vital to the success of a company - which is why it is important to get blogging right.

There is plenty to be gained from the process of blogging and obviously, the value, as with email marketing, lies in the content. This communication channel provides an opportunity for you to foster an online identity for your brand as well as giving your company a voice and a personality. This happens through the content you distribute as well as the tone you use to converse with your readers. There is more information on blogging in the chapter *Social Media Channels*.

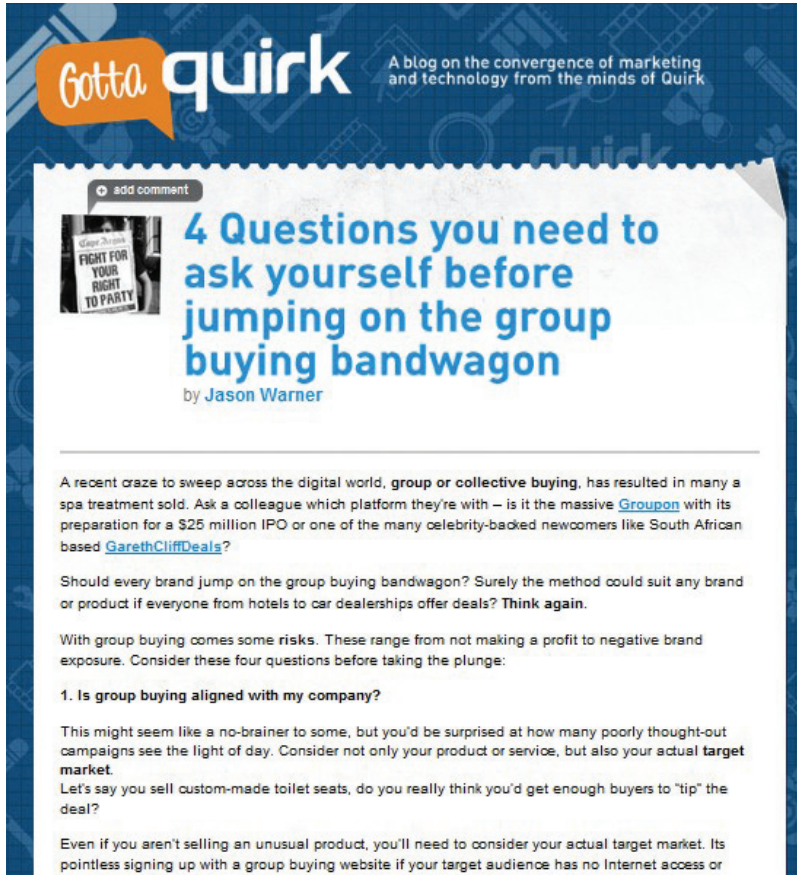


Figure 5.5 A blog post on GottaQuirk.com

5.6.2 Short Copy

Online copy often has only a small amount of space and a short amount of time to get a message across to a visitor, and entice them to take action. This is especially true of banner advertising and PPC adverts on search engines, but is also important across all digital marketing disciplines. Probably the most important short copy is the Call to Action.

The Call to Action

Users scan web pages and look for clues as to what to do. Tell them. A Call to Action is a short, descriptive instruction that explicitly tells a reader what to do (for example, "click here"). Banner advertising usually involves a clear Call to Action, and they can also be used in paid search advertising. Call to Action copy is not limited to short copy: email newsletters and promotions should also make use of Calls to Action, and we even see them all over web pages.



Figure 5.6 A Call to Action should be short and to the point.

Any time there is an action you want a reader to take, a Call to Action should instruct the visitor what to do. This means using active verbs when you write, and crafting hyperlinks to be clear instructions that resonate with your visitor at each step in the conversion process.

A good Call to Action resonates with the action the visitor needs to take, as opposed to the technical function that is performed. For example, if a user has entered an email address to sign up to your email newsletter, the action button should say “sign up” and not “submit”.

Consider as well what actions mean offline. Again with email newsletters, “sign up” can have very different connotations to “subscribe”. Further, “subscribe” is very different to “subscribe for free”. Whereas subscriptions have connotations of costs, “sign up” does not carry the same burden. However, “subscribe for free” could imply greater value – something that would normally carry a cost is available to you for free.

Titles and Subject lines

Titles and subject lines often form part of a body of long copy. However, they are important enough to be discussed as stand-alone short copy. Titles and subject lines are there for a very important reason: they inform a reader whether or not they are likely to want to read further. They are the gateway to your content.

Consider the following two titles:

Guide to online copywriting

Ten steps to online copywriting that sells

The second title conveys more information to the reader, information that helps the reader to make a decision to read further.

Why Should you Care?

Online media allows for direct feedback, making finding your audience much easier. Getting their location and demographic right is vital and they are all on social networking sites. Are you **maximising on engagement, or simply shooting the breeze?**

note

Use active verbs for sentences in the active voice. This sentence is in the active voice. Passive verbs can be used, but tend to make for less instructive copy. Passive voice is being used in this sentence.

Subject lines are like titles for emails, and can make the difference between an email being deleted instantly and being opened and read.

As with a title, use the subject line to make clear what the email is about. For example, if there is a promotion in the email, consider putting it in the subject line as well.

Titles, headlines and subject lines need to be both persuasive and enticing. Consider what need your copy is meeting for your readers, and express that first.

PPC Adverts

PPC adverts have a very limited space, and very limited time, to get a message across, as well as plenty of competition for a reader's attention. These four lines of copy need to work hard to ensure a top return on investment.

note

Refer to the chapter *Pay Per Click* advertising for Google's editorial guidelines.

PPC adverts follow the same basic structure:

Heading

Two lines of advert copy,
Which can be displayed on one line

www.DisplayURL.com

With a limited word count available, it can seem a daunting task to communicate information that entices the right traffic to clickthrough, and differentiates you from your competition. Testing variations of copy is the best way to determine what works best for your campaign. While copywriters are not generally responsible for writing PPC ads, they are often brand custodians and should review all copy representing a brand.

5.7 SEO copywriting

A good online copywriter will have a thorough understanding of SEO and how this can be integrated into her writing. Now that you understand key phrases and indeed, how they are used in short copy such as PPC adverts, it is worth a brief look at how these can be integrated into the longer copy we write.

SEO copywriters need to know how to blend keywords into their content as well as knowing how to use them in conjunction with HTML tags and Meta Data. In addition to assisting you with structuring your content, these tags indicate relevancy and context to search engines. Some of the tags are used by screen readers, and so they assist visitors with technical limitations to access your content. The Meta description can also be used by search engines on the search engine results pages (SERPs).

Below are a few places where we tend to include key phrases on our website.

5.7.1 Page URL

The main key phrase for the page should be used in the URL for the page. Often, the URL is generated from the page title, so using the key phrase in the page title should ensure that it is in the URL as well.



note

Each page on a website must have a unique URL, title meta keywords and meta description.

5.7.2 Page Title

The page title appears at the top of a user's browser and should be able to tell them (and the search engine spiders, of course) what the main theme of the page is. The page title is limited to 66 characters (including spaces). The key phrase should be used as close to the beginning of the title as possible.

5.7.3 Meta Description

The meta description is a short paragraph describing the page content. This summary is usually shown on the SERPs if it contains the search term searched for, which means it needs to entice users to clickthrough. The spiders use the meta description to deduce the topic of the page and the use of targeted key phrases is important here. Copy is limited to no more than 152 characters (including spaces).

```
<meta>
  <title>Quirk Marketing Agency | Born Digital</title>
<meta name="description" content="Quirk is a marketing agency. Born digital, driven by creativity and disciplined by results. Find out more about the agency's solutions and key clients." />
<meta name="keywords" content="marketing agency digital creativity results international solutions businesses connected audiences platforms campaigns software applications technology consumer agencies offices clients brand quirk" />
```

5.7.4 Meta Keywords

The meta keywords are a list of the words and phrases that are important on a web page. The use of targeted key phrases is important, but remember - no keyword stuffing. The meta keywords are limited to 200 characters (including spaces). This is, however, no longer a major element used by search engines. It's best to get as many elements as possible correct as we can never be absolutely certain of the search algorithms.

note

Keyword stuffing refers to putting too many keywords into the meta keywords tagging, and using keywords that are not relevant to the web page. Search engines can penalise this as a spam practice.

5.7.5 Headings and Sub-headings

Spiders assign more relevance to the text used in headings, so it is important to use your key phrases in the headings on your page. It also helps to structure your content.

Heading structures:

<h1> **page heading**

<h2> Sub-headings

<h3> **Information under the sub-headings**

Having a good heading hierarchy is important as spiders use it to move through your page. The hierarchy indicates what is more important and how the content is broken up.

5.7.6 Page Copy

The number of times you use the key phrases is entirely dependent on how long the page of copy is. You want to optimise the page for the key phrases without their use being overt.

For SEO effectiveness, a page of web copy should not be less than 250 words. On a 250 word page you could use the primary key phrase eight times (this includes use in meta data, headings, title and body copy) and the secondary key phrase four times.

discussion point

Why should you avoid requiring the user to scroll many times to read a page of content?

The page should not be so long that the user needs to scroll and scroll and scroll again to get to the end of it. If you find the page is getting exceptionally long, consider breaking it into different sections for different web pages. This way you could add more pages of optimised copy focused on one theme, instead of one very long page.

5.7.7 Links to Your Optimised Page

The text used to link from one page to another is considered important by the search engine spiders, so try to ensure your key phrase is used when linking to the optimised page. Anchor text of links should include the key phrase of the page being linked to, and not the page being linked from.

5.7.8 Images: Alt Text and Title Tags

Alt text refers to the “alt” attribute for the IMG HTML tag: this is the text that appears in the caption. It is used in HTML to attribute a text field to an image on a web page, normally with a descriptive function, telling a user what an image is about and displaying the text in instances where the image is unable to load. While this is handy for readers we also use it for another reason: search engine spiders can’t read images, but they can read the alt text. The image title tag is what shows when you hover with your mouse over an image and can also be read by the search engine spider.

5.8 best practices for online copywriting

Now that we have covered the basic theoretical principles of writing for the web, we need to look at the best practices to apply whenever you are writing copy for publication on the web. There are a number of things that you need to consider:

- Does the layout of your copy make it easier to read?
- Is your meaning clear and direct?
- Does it convey the features and benefits necessary to make your point (if applicable)?
- Will your readers clearly understand the content of your writing?
- Is the content of your message structured in a logical manner?

The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to ensuring that you have the knowledge and tools to answer these questions.

5.8.1 Layout and Legibility

As we have mentioned already, readers process content differently online to the way that they read offline. Both can be for leisure purposes. However, online, readers tend to scan text rather than read every word.

As a result, online copy is judged at first glance, not just on content, but first and foremost on its layout. It needs to appear to be easy to read before a user will choose to read it.

Digital copy should be easy to scan. This means making use of:

- Clear and concise headings
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- Short paragraphs
- Bold and italics
- Descriptive links

It’s easy to see this in practice.

Our success is primarily a result of how we are organised. Unlike many agencies, **our model is built-for-purpose** and focuses on an approach we call T.C.E.O.:

- Think
- Create
- Engage
- Optimise

These fields work together to result in a cohesive team capable of executing on any strategy to drive results.

Figure 5.7 Quirk Agency Model.

Before	After
<p>Tea has been drunk for thousands of years, and as people are growing more health conscious, tea sales are increasing. Personal preference plays an important role in making the perfect cup of tea. However, using fresh water ensures maximum oxygen in the tea, and warming the teapot first is standard practice. Tradition dictates one teabag per person, and one for the pot. Tea is served with milk, lemon, honey or sugar, according to taste.</p>	<p>Worldwide, tea sales are increasing as people are becoming more health conscious. Here are some tips on making the perfect cup of tea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use fresh water (for maximum oxygen) • warm the teapot first • use one teabag per person, and one for the pot <p>The perfect cup of tea is based on personal preference and taste. Tea can be served with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • milk or lemon • honey or sugar

Figure 5.8 Using layout to make writing more legible.

5.8.2 Language

It’s already been said that the basic principles of good writing still apply online. However, because you have the limited, and sometimes divided attention of your audience, it is best to keep it simple and tailor your language to your audience.

Tone

The tone of your content should be consistent with the brand for which you are writing. If necessary, read some of the brand material to get a feel for the company’s style of communication. Compare the difference in tone in the examples below.

Example of Tone A: Investec

Since Investec was founded in South Africa in 1974, it has expanded through a combination of substantial organic growth and a series of strategic acquisitions in South Africa, the United Kingdom and other geographies.

Investec's strategic goals are motivated by the desire to develop an efficient and integrated business on an international scale through the active pursuit of clearly established core competencies in the group's principal business areas.

http://www.investec.co.za/#home/about_investec.html

Example of Tone B: Nando's

500 000 years ago Civilisation as we know it was born. People have started to cook with fire and the idea that food is more than just nourishment. A community spirit is emerging as people gather together around a flame, talking, sharing and laughing, in wait for their meal.

The Mozambique community is flourishing. Life here revolves around early evening feasts about the fire. Everyone joins together to share good food and their heroic stories of the day! This is where the famous story of the discovery of Peri-Peri began. It is said that a young spirited boy went exploring one day and returned late that night with the African Bird's Eye Chilli. It had been shown to him by the African people who named it Pili-Pili.

http://www.nandos.co.za/nandos_story.html

Active vs Passive Voice

Grammatically speaking, people expect that characters execute actions that then have an impact on objects or other characters. For example: The girl ate a chocolate.

- The girl is the subject
- The action is the act of eating the chocolate
- The chocolate is the object that is affected by the action

This is known as the active voice. Unfortunately, writers often use the passive voice when writing. This turns the object into the subject. For example: The chocolate was eaten by the girl.

This is automatically translated by the human brain into the format that it expects. According to Price and Price (2000), this adds 25% to the time required to understand a sentence.

In all writing, it is better to use the active voice.

Neologisms and Buzzwords

Sometimes the World Wide Web is referred to as the Wild Wild Web as it can seem to be an environment where anything goes. The ever expanding numbers of social media participants play fast and loose with grammar.

With new services and products being developed daily, it can feel like the list of new words, and new ways to use words, is growing faster than you can keep up. Dictionaries and reference guides celebrate this regularly with a “word of the year”, usually one that has been in heavy use by the Internet audience for the three years preceding its entrance into a dictionary.

For example, in 2005, “podcast” was voted word of the year by the editors of the New Oxford American dictionary, while “blog” had its day in 2004 when it was declared word of the year by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary. The word “blog” was coined in 1999.

Online services can quickly become verbs in everyday language, so we talk of “Googling something” instead of “searching on Google” and of “Facebooking someone”.

note

Mozilla Firefox is a free, open source browser developed by the Mozilla Foundation. As well as having improved and safer browsing, you can download extensions that let you customise your browser. You can download it for free from www.mozilla.org.

Always remember you are writing for your users first and foremost. If your content is aimed at cutting edge early-adopters, then litter it with the latest buzz words. If your audience does not know the difference between Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer, then be cautious when using a word that did not exist the day before.

Users dictate your copy.

Features and Benefits

Writing compelling copy means conveying to readers why they should perform an action. While features may seem all important, you need to communicate the benefits of the features to the user.

- **Feature:** a prominent aspect of a product or service which can provide benefit to users. It describes what the product does.
- **Benefit:** the positive outcome for a user that a feature provides. It can be the emotional component of what the user gets out of the product.

Features and benefits are very different. Features are important to the company that provides the product or service. Benefits are important to those who decide to use the product or service.

For example, consider a home entertainment system. Features could include surround sound and a large flat screen television. The benefit: a cinema quality experience in your own home.

Persuasive writing makes use of features, benefits and active verbs to create appealing messages for your personas:

Enjoy cinema quality movie nights in your own home with a surround sound home entertainment system.

5.8.3 Logic

The structure of online copy can be compared most closely to the structure of a newspaper article. The headline, usually containing the most important bit of information in a story, comes first. Online, visitors need to decide quickly whether or not to read a page. As a result of this, the most important information needs to be at the top of the page.

Start with the summary or conclusion – the main idea of the article.

While clever word play in headings and titles can attract some attention, online these need to be written to be as descriptive as possible. The copy is multi-tasking: not only is it informing visitors of what to expect, it is also telling search engine spiders what the page is about.

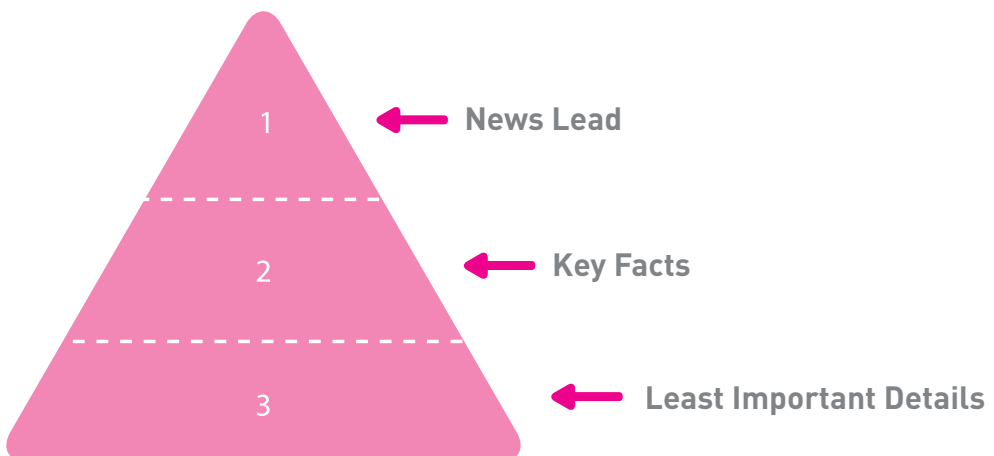


Figure 5.9 Information Hierarchy.

5.9 tools of the trade

The **Simple Measure of Gobbledygook** (SMOG) formula from Harry McLaughlin can be used to calculate the reading level of copy that you have written. A SMOG calculator, and instructions for use, can be found on his website: www.harrymclaughlin.com/SMOG.htm

Alternatively, www.flesh.sourceforge.net offers a Java application that produces the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level and the Flesh Reading Ease Score of a document.

For an **online dictionary** and an **online thesaurus**, you can visit www.dictionary.reference.com and www.thesaurus.com/. Thinkmap's **Visual Thesaurus** at www.visualthesaurus.com is also a thesaurus, but with an interactive map that lets you explore words. It's easy to spend a lot more time on this website than you originally planned!

When it comes to **keyword research**, there are a host of tools available. Some are listed below:

- SEO Book - tools.seobook.com/firefox/seo-for-firefox.html
- Wordtracker - www.wordtracker.com
- AdWords - adwords.google.com/select/Login
- Trellion's Keyword Discovery Tool - www.keyworddiscovery.com
- Hitwise Keyword Intelligence - www.keywordintelligence.com
- SEO Chat's Keyword Suggestions for Google - www.seochat.com/seo-tools/keyword-suggestions-google

5.10 summary

Online copy is at the foundation of a website. It is constantly in view – and more often than not the focal point of a page. Good online copy can also be the difference between a site seeing regular traffic or becoming stagnant.

Your writing needs to have the reader in mind first and foremost. The copy should be strong, yet easily readable while still making maximum use of key phrases.

chapter questions

1. When writing for the web, why are descriptive titles better than titles which play on words?
2. Why should users dictate your content? List some ways that users' needs determine content.

3. Why does web copy need to be easy to read?
4. For some real online copywriting practice, choose an article in a magazine or newspaper, and rewrite it for an Internet audience.

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Google AdWords Help Center

[accessed 17 June 2008]

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New Riders, Indiana

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<http://www.seomoz.org/article/beginners-guide-to-search-engine-optimization>

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further reading

- To get started on writing for the Web, *Hot Text – Web Writing That Works* is an easy to read and thorough resource. The website for the book is www.webwritingthatworks.com.
- www.copyblogger.com has regular articles and case studies on writing online copy that converts.
- www.wordwise.typepad.com – Dan Santow of Edelman posts regularly on his blog with practical tips for improving your writing, whether it be emails to colleagues, blog posts, news releases or articles, and includes updates on neologisms, web words and style.
- FutureNow's GrokDotCom.com published *Online Copywriting 101: The Ultimate Cheat Sheet* over two posts, providing 101 links to the best online copywriting references on the Internet:
 - » www.grokdotcom.com/2007/10/29/copywriting-101
 - » www.grokdotcom.com/2007/11/13/copywriting-101-part-2

What's inside: An introduction to why the **mobile phone is such an important device** in the connected world, helping us understand how brands can communicate through them. There are **key terms and concepts** and the important points to consider when designing **mobile websites and branded applications**, which leads to a discussion on the importance of following best practice for mobile development.

6.1 introduction

The mobile phone might be a small gadget, but it has revolutionised our lives. It has already had a profound impact on the way we communicate and conduct ourselves daily, and this continues to be felt as the mobile phone enables new ways to market, and new markets in which to interact.

The Internet transformed our world in two fundamental ways: It gave anyone with access to the Internet the opportunity to interact easily with others (including companies and brands); and through search, it has made information readily available. Developed as a platform for academics to share information, the web has a strong ethos of free content.

More recently, mobile phones are changing the way in which we access the Internet and communicate with each other. Mobile phones can be considered a developing technology, which means new and better features are continuously being packed into ever smaller devices. Using mobile devices and their features builds on the interactive nature of the Internet, with users being able to create and consume content from almost anywhere in the world.

While the Internet and the personal computer have had a profound impact on the world in which we transact, it is the mobile phone that presents an exciting opportunity for most of the world’s population. The term “mobile devices” of course applies to a number of devices that are becoming more and more common. Tablet computers and even netbooks can be considered mobile devices. This chapter focuses primarily on the mobile phone, but many of the design principles apply, whether you are discussing a mobile phone or a tablet.

Current figures indicate that there are 1.7 billion people worldwide with access to the Internet. Of those, 1.3 billion are active users of email. With the world’s population at 6.7 billion, that’s almost a fifth of the population who can be reached by email. However, compare that to five billion mobile phone subscribers - more than half of the world’s population. Of that five billion, only one billion aren’t active users of short message service (SMS) text messaging (Comscore 2011). That means that almost 60% of the world’s population could be reached by an SMS.

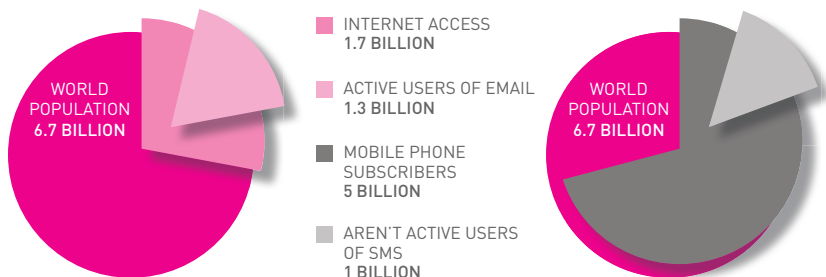


Figure 6.1 Current Global Internet Access.

With figures like that, it's obvious why so many organisations are investigating the mobile phone as a marketing platform; one which can be used by companies to engage with consumers and to facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction.

6.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
3G	The third generation of mobile network technology with improved speeds in comparison to EDGE. 3G allows for mobile streaming and improved Internet connection speeds.
App	Short for application; a mobile app is a software program designed to complete a specific set of functions on a specific model and make of phone.
Basic phone	A basic phone has a numerical keypad, severely limited data storage, little to no Internet capabilities and a low quality display.
Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)	This is a language used to describe how an HTML document should be formatted. Cascading Style Sheets provide the ability to separate the layout and styles of a web page from the data or information displayed on the page.
Compact HyperText Markup Language (CHTML)	A version of HTML for mobile devices and other limited hardware.
Click-to-call	A function which allows the mobile user to click on a link to make a telephone call.
Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution (EDGE)	EDGE is mobile phone technology that allows for faster speeds than that of a basic GSM network.
Feature phone	Similar to a basic phone but with several improved features which can include a camera, radio, limited storage capacity and low-end online capabilities.
Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM)	GSM is the most basic mobile network. It is the most widely used network in the world, with about 80% of mobile users connecting via the GSM network.
Smart phone	A phone with more enhanced capabilities than that of a feature phone, and can be considered a mobile computer as it offers many of the same features.

Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)	USSD works on all existing GSM phones. It provides session-based communication, enabling a variety of applications.
World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)	W3C have been the leaders in web standards and best practices for a long time and have now expanded to include the mobile web.
QWERTY	This refers to the most often used modern day keyboard layout. Regarding mobile phones, it refers to devices with a full keypad. The name comes from the first six keys appearing in the top letter row of the keyboard which together spell QWERTY.

6.3 history

There was a time when browsing the Internet using a mobile phone was as pleasant as submitting tax returns. Mobile browsing and development has progressed in leaps and bounds, with contemporary phones capable of handling features normally reserved for desktop browsing.

Although the first mobile browser was developed in 1994 - as PocketWeb for Apple Newton - it was only in 1998 when Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) became the industry standard that mobile browsing truly took off. Very few mobile handsets actually supported WAP, and even fewer websites were formatted for mobile browsing. So, the concept of anytime, anywhere Internet access became firmly entrenched in the developing mobile community as the first generation of access (1G) was born.

Using the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) network, developers quickly began formatting websites for mobile devices. Applications like MXit, launched in 2003, took advantage of low data costs to transfer instant messages. At the same time, phones started looking less like construction bricks and more like the standard numerical keypad phones used in the majority of countries today.

In the early 2000s, feature and smart phones began utilising the newly launched Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution (EDGE) network as part of 2G technology - a technological expansion of the original GSM network. Developers also began utilising EDGE for content heavy websites and small file downloads. As the use of 2G phones became more prevalent and people began to utilise mobile phones in their daily lives, it became clear that the demand for data services would soon need overhauling.

Developers began work on third generation (3G) technology which made use of packet switching rather than circuit switching for data transmission – enabling speeds of up to three megabytes per second compared to 2G speeds of 240 kilobytes per second.

On 3G networks, mobile television and highspeed browsing finally became a reality. The launch of Apple Inc's first iPhone in 2007 saw mobile applications (often referred to as "apps") gain mainstream popularity.

As with most technology, development on mobile browsing continues constantly. Several 3G networks are already struggling to support the increasing number and demands of users. As of the writing of this book the next step for consumers and developers is 4G technologies, allowing for transfer speeds of up to 100 gigabytes per second. Although available in some countries, 4G is yet to spread globally.

The top level domain name .mobi was launched in 2006 specifically for mobile websites.

In the mobile environment the popularity of mobile applications has led to an entirely new marketplace. When Apple launched the App Store in 2008 and made it possible for third-party developers to create applications that would run on the iPhone, they challenged the walled garden approach to mobile phone software and utilities. Any developer could create an application to solve a specific need, something that until then was nearly impossible in the somewhat restricted mobile phone environment. From turning your phone into a mouse, to offering you a way to analyse the gravitational pull no matter where you stand, the applications are entertaining and allow developers the potential to create something original.

In November 2007, an initiative titled the Open Handset Alliance (OHA) was launched. A number of companies are part of this alliance which aims to develop standards for mobile devices. The OHA's first product was Android, a Google mobile operating system. This is an open source mobile operating system (meaning the software is free and easily accessible) which is currently used on mobiles produced by a number of different mobile manufacturers, including HTC.

note

Some would argue that Apple's App Store is still a walled garden, as Apple strictly vets and controls applications made available through the store.

6.3.1 Types of Mobile Devices

Mobile devices can be broadly categorised as basic, feature or smartphones, and tablets are also considered a mobile device.

Basic: These phones provide basic call and text messaging capabilities. They typically offer predictive text, calculators and alarm clocks, but these features and functions vary between handsets.

All basic phones on the GSM network are voice, SMS and USSD (don't worry, we cover this a bit later) enabled. Even though basic phones provide only entry level communication, GSM standards allow for marketing, advertising and even mobile payments.

Feature: Feature phones can be seen as the middle ground in the current mobile world, offering more capabilities than the basic send/receive phone and fewer options than the progressive smartphones. These colour screen phones facilitate the basics, and often have a few multimedia applications such as cameras or MP3 players, handy features such as calendars and often additional storage capabilities to store the rich multimedia information such as video or image content.

Most feature phones have WAP capabilities. Simply put, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) is a GSM protocol aimed at providing wireless information and telephonic services. WAP makes it possible to implement services similar to the World Wide Web on your mobile phone and adds additional browsing ability.

Smartphones: BlackBerry smartphones, Apple iPhones, Google's Nexus One, PDAs and other smartphone devices, are moving closer to the benefits offered by desktop computers while still integrating the benefits of mobility. They offer video and still cameras, dictaphones, radios, music and video players, calculators, gaming devices and e-commerce options. They can make calls and access the Internet too.

Smartphones are at the top of the mobile device pyramid. They were initially quite expensive, and so uptake has been slower than their predecessors, but this is changing with contract deals and dropping prices.

Tablets: Tablets are touchscreen personal computer devices. They have wireless adapters for Internet connectivity. They often recognise both virtual keyboard input and handwriting recognition. They are designed to be used by an individual and do not incorporate a separate operator but rather allow users to interact directly with the machine.



Figure 6.2 Tablets are increasingly popular mobile devices.

6.4 why mobile web development?

Developing for the mobile phone requires an understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by mobile technology. Challenges include the obvious, such as a smaller screen and navigation limitations, to more complex issues such as file formats.

There are two opportunities for developing content for mobile phones: mobile websites and mobile applications.

Mobile websites make it possible for users to access information about your brand on the move wherever they may be, as long as their phone has a browser and an Internet connection.

Mobile websites need to be designed with the mobile phone in mind. Mobile website interfaces demand a simpler approach, one which many brands have neglected to cater for as they assume their sites will only be visited via personal computers.

An **application** is software designed to help users perform particular tasks. You may be familiar with word processors, media players and similar applications used on desktop computers. Mobile applications are similar, but they are for mobile phones. A mobile application might be a fuel calculator or a recipe index.

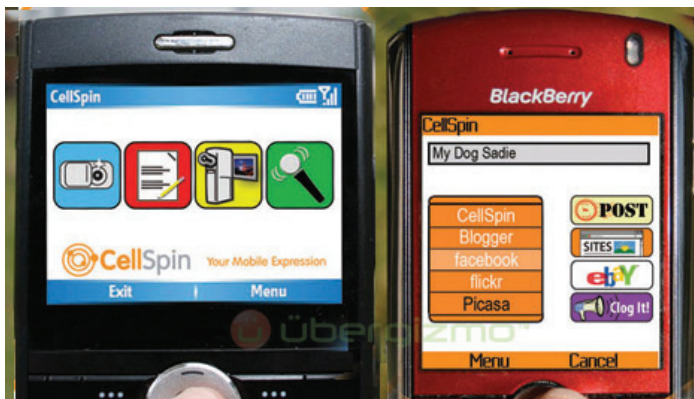


Figure 6.3 Mobile applications help users perform specific tasks.

Source: Übergizmo

Mobile apps can be sold, or made available for free. There are many developers who create apps in order to sell downloads and derive an income, while free apps that offer users value are often sponsored by brands. In this way an application can be an excellent tool for connecting with your customer. In this chapter we

will look at the key differences between mobile websites and applications, as well as provide some basic information for designing your own mobile website or application.

6.4.1 Mobile Web vs. Mobile App

The key difference between mobile applications and mobile websites is that websites can be accessed using any Internet enabled mobile device, while applications are designed for particular handsets and operating systems.

Should you wish to target Apple and BlackBerry users, for example, you will need to create two different applications or focus on making a cross-platform application – something that can be difficult and expensive. Given the many different devices out there, targeting a specific device can also ensure you avoid many of the challenges mobile website developers face in terms of creating a consistent user experience across phones.

It is a good idea to focus on mobile sites when targeting a broader group and building an application when wanting to reach a niche or targeted audience. BlackBerry, iPhone, Windows Mobile and Google’s Nexus One all run on operating systems which support the creation of applications.

It’s also worth considering that a mobile site can be built once-off (in theory) while an application must be rebuilt for every platform and must be adaptable to phone updates. Applications can be useful for performing functions while websites connect users with a range of information. It doesn’t always come down to a case of “either, or”. Your mobile application could be used as a bookmark to connect a user to your mobile site.

	Mobile Websites	Applications
Devices	Device independent. You just need a browser and a connection.	Build for each platform, e.g. iOS, Android, Symbian.
Experience	Different browsers and devices might affect experience.	Developer can control the experience by designing for each device.
Discoverability	Websites can be found through search and links.	Applications are found through application stores, such as Apple’s App Store.

Figure 6.4 Mobile Websites vs. Applications.

6.5 why the mobile phone?

The mobile phone is a sophisticated device. Today's phones can act as alarm clocks, cameras, video recorders, MP3 players, calendars, notebooks, and messaging devices - they can even make voice calls.

However, it is not this plethora of features which makes the mobile phone such an attractive device for marketers. The following seven features are what turn mobile phones into something truly remarkable for marketers (Ahonen 2008).

- The mobile phone is personal.
- The mobile phone is always carried.
- The mobile phone is always on.
- The mobile phone has a built-in payment system.
- The mobile phone is available at the point of creative inspiration.
- The mobile phone can provide accurate audience measurements.
- The mobile phone captures the social context of media consumption.

If you consider your relationship with your mobile phone, these features should make sense. However, a few facts and figures never hurt anyone, and the following elaborates more fully on these features.

The Mobile Phone is Personal

A 2006 survey ("Wireless Works" by BBDO and Proximity) found that 63 percent of respondents would not share their phone with anyone (90 percent of those surveyed in Japan would not share their phone). While laptops do present a personal connection to the Internet, they are not as personal a device as the mobile phone.

The implication for marketers is that respect for privacy and permission is exceptionally important in all aspects of marketing, and particularly so when it comes to mobile phones.

The Mobile Phone is Always Carried

What do you take with you when you leave your house? Wallet, keys, and mobile phone. What do you always keep near you when you are at home? Your mobile phone. According to 2007 research by Morgan Stanley, ninety-one percent of mobile phone owners keep their phone within three feet, twenty-four hours a day. People have their phones with them at all times of the day, even in the bathroom.

The implication for marketers is that messages sent to recipients can be read and acted on immediately. Unlike, for example, email, which requires that the recipient be in front of his or her computer and connected to the Internet,

messages sent to mobile phones will most likely be accessed within minutes of being received.

The Mobile Phone is Always On

In order to fulfill its primary function - as a telephone - the mobile phone is always on. Messages and services can be sent and acted on at all times of the day.

This means marketers need to be even more sensitive with their marketing communications. Not many people would appreciate a short message service (SMS) at four in the morning informing them of a special offer.

The Mobile Phone has a Built-In Payment System

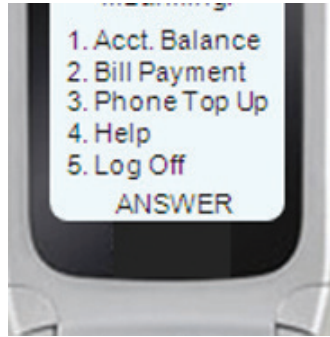


Figure 6.5 USSD is a secure channel that has made mobile banking an option via basic mobile phones. Source: Mobile Commerce Daily

This is perhaps the key feature of the mobile phone and one reason why content for mobile phones in many areas generates as much, if not more revenue, than content tailored for the Internet. Every mobile phone has a built-in payment mechanism - the subscriber identity module (SIM) card. Billing is easily handled through the user's mobile network. Not only do mobile phones have this built-in payment mechanism, but paying for content and downloads has also been built into the way consumers use their phones. There is less of an expectation that goods and services will be free, although as the mobile app market expands, this is changing.

There are also a number of services that turn the mobile phone into a virtual wallet or bank card, bringing banking and payment services to people all around the world.

iChannel, a mobile news ticker feed in Japan, generates US\$192 million per year in subscriptions for its US\$2-a-month service. It has more paying subscribers on this single service than all online newspapers in the world combined. Similar cases can be made for games, music, and other mobile content.

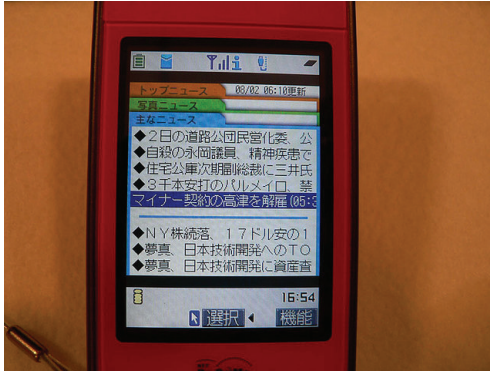


Figure 6.6 *iChannel is an innovative news service. DoCoMo i-channel.*

Source: DoCoMo i-channel

The implication for marketers is that consumers are willing to pay for services and content on their mobile. Advertising is not the only way to generate revenue for content.

The Mobile Phone is Available at the Point of Creative Inspiration

As the mobile phone is always carried and always on, it is always available as a creative tool. Phones today feature a number of tools that let users act on creative impulse, from taking photos and videos, to becoming a scribbling pad on which to jot down ideas.

The implication for marketers is that these features can be used to encourage interactivity with campaigns created for mobile phones. It presents the mobile phone as a useful tool in viral campaigns based on consumer-generated content.

6.6 how it works

6.6.1 Designing a Mobile Site

Designing a site which will display consistently across multiple handsets is near impossible, but understanding and sticking to web standards will certainly bring you closer to this goal. When it comes to promoting your website, search is just as important as on the traditional web.

Mobile sites should offer a simpler version of the original site – including only the essential and pertinent information your visitor needs in order to fulfill their mobile goals. Given data costs and restrictions, you want your information to be easy and quick to access. There is, however, a balance to be struck. You don't want to over simplify your site to the point that it offers no value.

Design your site in such a way that the information your users want is not only on display, but also easy to get to. Bear in mind limited screen space is valuable, so you can't necessarily have the full site navigation on every page. The information architecture of your site is thus essential to ensuring you make the most logical use of navigation in line with what your site visitors need. There are benefits to mobile development that can help you get around this. Mobile connectivity allows for geo-targeted browsing, meaning you can serve the user content relevant to their geographical location and cut down on unnecessary clicks.

Mobile usability means taking a number of factors into consideration:

- **Why is someone visiting your mobile site? What is their purpose? This helps you to develop the right type of content for your website.**
- **What navigation options (touchscreen, keypad, QWERTY) do they have at their disposal? This helps you to understand how users will be accessing and navigating your content.**
- **How powerful is their mobile device likely to be? If they use smartphones for example, you may have more freedom and functionality than designing for people with feature phones. You may decide that you are dealing with both groups.**

To answer the first question, one could divide mobile web users into three personas.

- **People who are bored and browsing while waiting (think of the minutes wasted in a bank queue).**
- **Those who are task driven and urgently looking for information, like someone trying to get their flight details or the number for a taxi cab at three in the morning.**
- **Those who are performing a repeated action, like checking the weather or stock quotes.**

Another approach is to arrange peoples' use of the mobile web into two categories, those looking for utility and those looking for entertainment.

Providing entertainment via the mobile phone is perfect for people who want to kill time. It's the ideal medium for a snack of entertainment when people are looking for a quick break. Mobile games could be the next cigarette break! Utility, on the other hand, is one of the great strengths of the mobile phone offering. People on the go may investigate check-in and flight status reports or banking services.

How to make the mobile web work for you

When putting your site together it's important to design around your marketing goals. This will allow you to design for the right user and best set of goals. More is covered about this in the *Web Development* chapter.

Understanding your site visitors and the context in which they would access a mobile version of your website is an important step in putting together your mobile site design. In order to cater for people urgently looking for information, you'll always want to include important information like contact details or Calls to Action on the home page.

Remember that the most basic of handsets work with a limited keypad and only the ability to scroll up and down. Depending on your market, these might be the main devices you need to design for.

Essential information for any mobile website includes:

- **Contact details**
- **Directions or map**
- **About us, or the basics: who you are and what you do**

Decide what would be useful for your customers, but don't underestimate the power of a click-to-call link – people are on their phones after all.

Examples of websites with well-designed, specialised sites for the mobile web (many taken from *Mobithinking's best and worst of the mobile web*) are:

- m.facebook.com
- m.gmail.com
- m.twitter.com
- m.youtube.com
- BBC.mobi
- ESPN.mobi
- NWA.mobi
- BofA.mobi

(Mobithinking)

Desktop



(<http://www.gottaquirk.com/>)

Mobile

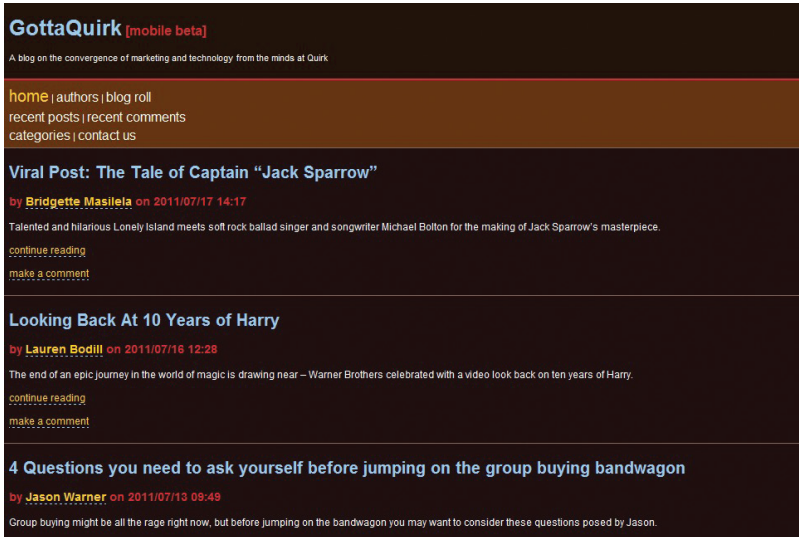


Figure 6.7 Simple site design results in better display on mobile.

(<http://m.gottaquirk.com>)

Generally Accepted Mobile Web Standards

The World Wide Web Consortium (WC3) is constantly evolving its web guidelines, which have been pivotal in improving the integrity of the Internet in recent years. They have now turned their attention towards better mobile website coding and structuring, with a mobile web initiative known as Mobile Web Best Practices 1.0.

1. If mobile users enter your site, make sure they are directed to the mobile version.

This is an important step, and one on which you will need input from your mobile developer. While users of smartphones can access any kind of website in its normal format, smaller or more limited devices will definitely benefit from a website suited to their needs. Often even smartphone users will have a better experience on a mobile website.

Mobile redirects work based on device detection – whether by screen size or device specifics – that allow a user to be redirected to the appropriate site. Some feel that a redirect should be an option rather than an automatic action, but W3C recommend the use of a redirect. As always, however, include a link back to the full site.

2. Ensure your markup is valid and error free with the W3C XML validator.

Validating your code is important for any designs which function in the Internet arena. The validator helps to ensure your code is compatible with web standards. Among the benefits of validating your code is that your site will display correctly across as many platforms as possible, your code will be leaner and therefore use less bandwidth (already limited on mobile phones), and be easier for designers to update when necessary.

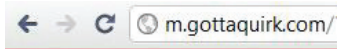
You can access the W3C validator at <http://validator.w3.org/>

3. Avoid frames and tables, and keep your site size down to a minimum.

In the early days of the web, designers tended to use HTML tables to lay out content for a web page, and many websites still do so today. However, different browsers, and even different versions of browsers all support code differently, resulting in websites that only work on certain browsers, or bulky code to cope with each version required.

By using cascading style sheets (CSS) for design, you can design a website that is likely to be easier to update and leaner to download for mobile sites, especially considering the vastly different screen sizes.

4. Keep URLs short and memorable.



Most forms of mobile communication are limited in character size. SMS, for example, is widely used but only allows 160 characters. Shorter URLs make it easier for users to find and access your site in the mobile environment. URL shorteners like bit.ly and mzan.si can be used to shorten websites links when shared but your URL should make it easy to type in the address.

5. Ensure that any images are automatically resized according to the phone model.

If images are resized at the server, rather than once they have been downloaded to the phone, data transfer times and rates will be vastly improved. The browser should therefore be told what sizes the images are. Speak to your developer about this.

6. Ensure your images are in a compressed format (gif, jpg).

There are a number of ways to compress different images. It is most important that download times are reduced.

7. Do not clutter with excessive navigation or menus.

Given the task driven nature of mobile browsing, it's important that the limited space on each page is focused around the primary objective of that page. While websites accessed through laptops and computers should have extensive and easy navigation available, the limited screen size of mobile devices may mean that the actual page content is compromised.

8. Do not use pop-ups, and keep scrolling to one direction.

Unless you are dealing with an object like a map, which demands secondary scrolling, scrolling must be kept to one direction at all times. Scrolling required for certain objects on a page will affect the layout of text on the rest of the page, meaning that a user won't see certain text.

It should also be fairly evident that a pop-up will disorient a mobile visitor.

9. Submit your sitemap to Google.

A sitemap lays out the structure of your website, which makes it much easier for search engines to crawl, and index your site swiftly. Once your mobile sitemap is coded in a supported format (HTML or XML) you can upload your sitemap to the highest level directory you want the search engines to crawl.

You can then:

- Sign into Google Webmaster Tools with your Google Account.
- Add your site to your account.
- Click on "add a sitemap" link beside your site's URL.
- In the drop down list, select "Mobile Sitemap".
- Type the URL of your site into your Mobile Sitemap Location in the provided field. Make sure you include the entire URL.
- Choose the markup language.
- Click on add sitemap.

10. Don't use Flash.

Flash requires more bandwidth and is difficult for search engines to index. It's also not accessible on many phones.

11. Ensure the fonts and colours used are supported (many phones default to their own fonts regardless of your specifications).

Your designer shouldn't assume that there will be support for font related styling, meaning that using **bolding** or italics won't often display on mobile phones.

Standards

W3C compliancy aside, there is little in the way of standards in place. Creating content (including images, text and beyond) that can be correctly formatted

on most phones (or at least legible on phones where formatting is flawed) is still not entirely possible. There is thus a certain amount of trial and error involved in designing a mobile site. The process which is certainly worth it considering that of the 3.4 billion unique users of mobile phones, a fair amount are accessing the mobile web (Toni Ahonen Consulting).

Mobile handset emulators allow you to see how your work-in-progress website would be formatted, depending on what model of phone or PDA you are emulating. It has been suggested that nothing can replace testing on actual mobile phones, so if you are doing the testing recruit contacts with different handsets to show you the difference in display.

Some emulators:

- DotMobi - <http://mtld.mobi/emulator.php>
- Test iPhone - www.testiphone.com
- BlackBerry - www.blackberry.com/developers/downloads/simulators

Challenges

As mentioned, navigation on a mobile site poses quite a challenge. As most handsets only have a basic alphanumeric keyboard and no mouse function, excess scrolling and typing makes it difficult for the user. Touchscreen devices can mean easier navigation, but you cannot assume that all of your web visitors have such devices.

Screen sizes vary between phone models and the browser used can result in a particular way of rendering sites, making mobile web development a tricky task.

Beyond navigational and formatting concerns, there are many different types of connections to the mobile web and service providers around the world. Mobile web designers always need to bear varying bandwidth speeds and costs in mind as certain options may just be impractical on different phones. The solution here is to make sure you understand your target market and the capabilities of their phones and data budgets when designing mobile communications.

Some people have smartphones with quick connections and full QWERTY keyboards, while most are browsing on the equivalent of an obsolete dial-up connection. Thus, keeping mobile sites trim and streamlined is vital.

While some traditional sites will display adequately on mobile phones (especially if viewed on a smartphone) it's important to test this in a number of simulators. If financially viable, designing a website focused around mobile specifications is certainly a favourable option.

6.6.2 Mobile Applications

Why a Branded Application?

The application market place is an interesting and much debated one. Some developers have been known to make a decent living from thousands of downloads of the applications they have sold. One application, a game called Angry Birds, was being downloaded more than one million times per day in June 2011 (White 2011). For brands the payoff is a bit different. By sponsoring an application your brand can win a dedicated spot and repeated attention from a targeted consumer.

Some examples of this include the Lynx Effect (known as Axe in certain markets) application that essentially helps boys hit on girls. You can check it out here: <http://www.lynxeffect.com.au/>.

Other successful examples are extensions of brand identity in ways that either offer utility or entertainment. A good range of examples are applications from beer brands. Applications that make your phone look like a beer being drunk are amusing, while a local pub finder can be useful.

For your brand, a free application could provide you with attention from your target market. As with any marketing campaign or initiative, your decision to design one should be taken in line with your overall marketing goals and an idea of the return on investment you are looking for.

Deciding on an application

There is no recipe for application success, but researching those already in existence will offer some insight into what works and what doesn't. You will naturally want to extend your brand or product identity into the application you design.

It is easiest to design an application which is tailored to specific devices. This, however, limits the number of people who can use your application on their device. Depending on your target market, it may be necessary to design applications for multiple devices and/or operating systems – Android OS, Apple devices like the iPhone, the Blackberry OS and Nokia devices which run Symbian.

6.7 summary

Mobile is a vital consideration in today's world. You can reach more of your market through a mobile phone, and as mobile devices get more powerful, you can create richer mobile experiences for them. However, as with all marketing activities, planning is crucial to success.

When designing for mobile, there are two main routes: mobile websites and mobile applications. Mobile websites are websites designed to cater for the limitations of the mobile device, and constraints demanded by the users' expectations. Mobile websites can be accessed by any phone with a browser and an Internet connection.

Applications, on the other hand, are device and platform specific. Applications tend to be more task focused than websites (even when that task is just "fun"). Applications need to be designed for a particular platform, and are not available on other platforms or devices. For many brands, applications offer a direct route to consumers' mobile devices. By creating applications with utility or entertainment in mind, brands can create useful mobile experiences for their target market.

6.8 the bigger picture

Mobile phones have been referred to as a "stitching" medium in marketing terms. Given that they are ever present and easily accessible, mobile phones can make it easier to connect other forms of marketing communications. Having a website available via a phone when someone sees your offline advert can make a significant difference to your customer's experience. Having a useful application available that users may use daily on their phones can do a lot for placing your brand top of mind.

6.9 case study: Diningout.co.za

Dining-OUT.co.za is South Africa's largest Internet-based restaurant guide. Dining-OUT began in 2000 and currently lists over 2 000 restaurants, attracting over 250 000 visitors per month. The website allows users to search for restaurants by location, food type and ambiance. The restaurants are split approximately 50/50 between one line listings and full listings. One line listings contain only location, food type and ambiance. Full listings contain an editorial, photos, full menu with prices, map with directions and the facility to make a booking.

In 2008, Dining-OUT launched a mobile version of the website (www.dining-out.co.za/m) aimed at providing customers with greater ease and flexibility in accessing the site. The mobile site contains the same features as the existing site, but has been optimised for the mobile browser. The site is able to detect the screen size on the handset and automatically adjust the resolution to fit as the sizes of mobile screens vary greatly from handset to handset. The search function has further been simplified with fewer pages to be loaded in the browser, meaning less of the customer's data bundle is used.

The mobile site allows people who do not have access to a computer or are on the move to find information on restaurants in their area. The benefit of a mobile website as opposed to an application is that the website is not tied down to a specific device (iPhone or BlackBerry) and may be accessed on any mobile device that has a browser and supports WAP.

case study questions

1. Why would a person want to check restaurant listings at any point?
2. How would a non-mobile website hinder checking listings on the move?
3. How could Dining-Out keep customers happy within specific geographic locations?

chapter questions

1. Given the massive differences between desktop web browsing and mobile browsing, what should a mobile developer take into consideration when creating a mobile website?
2. When should a brand consider using a mobile app instead of a website optimised for mobile phones?
3. Mobile copy and desktop copy have similar traits, but what rules should a person writing mobile copy adhere to?

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further reading

- <http://www.sencha.com/products/touch/> – Sencha Touch allows you to develop mobile web apps that look and feel native on iPhone, Android, and BlackBerry touch devices.
- <http://www.phonegap.com/> – PhoneGap is an HTML5 app platform that allows you to author native applications with web technologies and get access to APIs and app stores. PhoneGap leverages web technologies developers already know best... HTML and JavaScript.
- <http://www.jquerymobile.com/> – A unified user interface system across all popular mobile device platforms, built on the rock-solid jQuery and jQuery UI foundation. Its lightweight code is built with progressive enhancement, and has a flexible, easily themeable design.
- <http://www.mobilemarketer.com/> – While not geared specifically for developers, Mobile Marketer offers a wealth of information on marketing in the mobile space.

engage

introduction to engage

The next several chapters deal with driving traffic to the online assets which have been created, and more than that, driving traffic that starts to help in building relationships with potential and existing customers. The beauty of using the Internet to drive traffic and build relationships is the ability to track traffic-driving campaigns, and then use that information to both measure and report on campaigns, as well as to target campaigns more effectively.

It's useful to consider the many ways of reaching a customer in terms of their influence on the sales cycle. The sales cycle is the typical sequence of phases a customer moves through. It's often represented as a funnel, indicating that there are fewer consumers further along the sales cycle.

While one could probably argue the importance of each channel into every phase of the purchase cycle, some are clearly more influential at different phases than others.

Search marketing is so powerful because it is closely aligned with declared customer intent (more on that in the chapters on **Search Engine Marketing**, **Search Engine Optimisation** and **Pay Per Click Advertising**). Before someone searches for your service or product, they need to have heard about you and ideally placed you in the consideration set. They then need to favour you.

When it comes to consideration and favourability, the reviews and opinions of others matter. Being well represented in social media is important for brands marketing online, and online reputation management tools help brands and businesses to understand how digital communities perceive them.

Next, as a potential customer indicates intent via search, well optimised search engine marketing should convert that customer at their point of intent.

Digital then takes it further, moving from purchase to building relationships with customers (and often potential customers), using digital channels to interact and engage with them. Again, social media plays a big role here, as do traditional customer relationship management (CRM) tactics such as email marketing.

With the explosion in web access via mobile devices, it's important to understand these various channels in terms of the mobile phone. Mobile engagement is used to create awareness, drive direct action and build relationships.

In all of this, sometimes performance marketing or affiliate marketing is used to drive traffic and engagement on a pay for performance basis. Many affiliates will use any of the channels that we will be discussing, and as a marketer, you may opt to use affiliates for marketing activities.

While measurement and tracking will be discussed in each chapter, it's worth going into the chapters with an understanding of how we track, report on and pay for various online campaigns.

There are several terms you will see used throughout these chapters:

- **Impression:** when an advert or a piece of online content is served (and hopefully seen by a web user).
- **Interaction:** when a user interacts with an advert or content, such as playing a video, playing a game, or perhaps even leaving a comment.
- **Click:** exactly what it sounds like, when a user clicks on a link or advert. This is different to an interaction, because when a user clicks, they go to a different page on the web.
- **Action:** when a user completes a predetermined action, such as making a purchase, signing up to a newsletter or downloading some content.

These terms then lend themselves to different ways of paying for and measuring online campaigns. Sometimes we talk about campaigns in terms of cost per thousand (Mille) or CPM impressions. This is when campaigns are paid for in terms of the number of times content was served. It's used frequently in online advertising, but is also a way of measuring social content.

One can also look at the cost per interaction: the cost of a user interacting with a piece of content. Some of the most successful online campaigns are run on a cost per click (CPC) basis, where you don't pay for content to be served, but rather for each click on that content. Lastly, payment or measurement can be regarded in terms of the cost per action (CPA): the cost of a user taking action.

As you work through the following chapters, the above will become clearer to you.

Remember, the chapters that follow are important arrows in your digital marketing quiver. However, a strategic approach is required in order for you to determine the best solutions to meeting your online goals. You don't need to tackle everything at once: focus on the foundations first, and then track and measure in order to determine which channels are working best.

What's inside: An **introduction** to email marketing, the **key terms and concepts** you need for this chapter and the **history** of email marketing, to show how it developed into an effective digital marketing tool. We look at **how it works**, discussing how **email strategy and planning** are key to its success and how to **grow a database** and explore the **creative execution** of emails. We also look at how to integrate email campaigns with other channels, how and when to deploy emails and how **email analytics** can be used to track and measure campaigns. Finally we suggest some handy **tools of the trade** and provide a useful **case study** along with the **summary** of the chapter.

7.1 introduction

At its core, email marketing is a tool for customer relationship management (CRM). Used effectively, this extension of permission-based marketing can deliver one of the highest return on investments (ROI) of any digital marketing activity.

Simply put, email marketing is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic means to deliver commercial messages to an audience. It is one of the oldest yet most powerful of all digital marketing tactics. The power comes from the fact that it is:

- Extremely cost effective due to a low cost per contact
- Highly targeted
- Customisable on a mass scale
- Completely measurable

Further, email marketing’s main strength is that it takes advantage of a customer’s most prolific touch point with the Internet - their inbox. Many of the principles covered in this chapter can be applied to any type of permission marketing – especially SMS communication via mobile phones.

Email marketing is a tool for building relationships with both existing and potential customers. It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, which should ultimately lead to greater profitability.

7.2 key terms and concepts

Business to Business (B2B)	When businesses sell products/services to other businesses and not to consumers.
Business to Consumers (B2C)	When businesses sell products/services to consumers.
Call to action (CTA)	A CTA is a phrase written to motivate the reader to take action (sign up for our newsletter, book car hire today etc.).
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	A strategy for managing a company’s interactions with clients and potential clients. It often makes use of technology to automate the sales, marketing, customer service and technical processes of an organisation.
Database	In email marketing, the database is the list of prospects to which emails are sent. It also contains additional information pertinent to the prospects.
Domain Name System(DNS)	DNS converts a domain name into an IP address.

DomainKeys	An email authentication system designed to verify the DNS domain of an email sender and the message integrity.
Double opt-in	The act of getting subscribers to confirm their initial subscription via a follow up email asking them to validate their address and hence opt-in again.
Hard bounce	The failed delivery of email communication due to an undeviating reason like a non-existent address.
House list	An email database a company generates itself without purchasing or renting names.
HyperText Markup Language (HTML)	Certain HTML “tags” are used to structure the information and features within a web page. As an example, HTML emails usually contain graphics and can be interactive.
Internet Protocol (IP) Address	The IP address is an exclusive number, which is used to represent every single computer in a network.
Internet Service Provider (ISP)	This is the company providing you access to the Internet e.g. MWEB, AOL, Yahoo! etc).
Open rate	The percent of emails determined as opened out of the total number of emails sent.
Opt-in	To give permission for emails to be sent to you.
Opt-out	Also known as unsubscribe - The act of removing oneself from a list or lists so that specified information is no longer received via email.
Sender ID	A method used by major ISPs to confirm that emails do originate from the domain from which it claims to have been sent.
Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP)	SMTP is a protocol for sending messages from one server to another.
Soft bounce	The failed delivery of an email due to a deviating reason like an overloaded mail box or a server failure.
Spam	Email sent to someone who has not requested to receive it - EVIL!
Sender policy framework (SPF)	Sender policy framework is an extension of SMTP that stops email spammers from forging the “From” fields in an email.
Text	Text emails or plain text emails do not contain graphics or any kind of markup.
Unique forwarders	This refers to the number of individuals who forwarded a specific email on.
White list	A list of accepted email addresses that an ISP, a subscriber or other email service provider allows to deliver messages regardless of spam filter settings.

7.3 history

Email is probably ubiquitous to you, but there was a time when there was no email!

Email actually predates the Internet, and was first used as a way for users of the same computer to leave messages for each other all the way back in 1961. Ray Tomlinson is credited with creating the first network email application in 1971. He initiated the use of the @ sign and the address structure that we use today (username@hostname) (Crocker). Email was used to send messages to computers on the same network, and is still used for this purpose.

It was only in 1993 that large network service providers, such as America Online and Delphi, started to connect their proprietary email systems to the Internet. This began the large scale adoption of Internet email as a global standard. Coupled with standards created in the preceding twenty years, the Internet allowed users on different networks to send each other messages.

The first email spam dates back to 1978. Spam is defined as unsolicited commercial or bulk email, and today is said to account for 80 to 85% of all email (Waters 2008).

Direct marketing has long played an integral part of marketing campaigns, but the high cost meant that only large companies were able to pursue this. However, with the growth of the Internet, and the use of email to market directly to consumers, marketers have found these costs dropping, and the effectiveness increasing.

7.4 how it works

If you consider marketing as communicating with current and potential customers, you will see that every email sent from your organisation should be considered part of your email marketing plan.

Think about all the ways a company could make contact with you.

Transaction emails: when you request a quote, submit a contact form or seek financial advice there will be a number of emails you may receive. Should you need to communicate with a brand, you will no doubt need to send an email back.

Newsletters: these are emails sent to provide information and keep customers informed. They do not necessarily carry an overt promotion, but instead ensure that a customer is in regular contact with the brand.

There are two types of commercial emails:

Promotional emails: these are more direct and are geared at enticing the user to take an immediate action.

Retention based emails: also referred to as **newsletters**, these may include promotional messages but should be focused on providing information of value to the user, geared at building a long-term relationship with the user.

As with all digital marketing activities, careful planning is needed, as well as proper testing and evaluating, so as to optimise your revenue. Email marketing may be highly cost-effective, but the cost of getting it wrong can be very high indeed.

7.4.1 Email Strategy and Planning

The first part of any email campaign should involve planning for the goals you need to achieve. These will probably be in line with the goals of your website, with email marketing being used as a tool to help you achieve those goals. As with all tactics, email marketing should be considered in line with your overall marketing and digital strategy.

As discussed in the chapter on analytics and conversion optimisation, you will decide on the key performance indicators (KPIs) for your campaign as well. KPIs are the metrics that indicate how well you are performing.

Promotional emails will usually have an immediate goal:

- Users make a purchase
- Users download a whitepaper
- Users request further information

Newsletters tend to focus on longer term goals, and so your KPIs are more important here.

KPIs include:

- Open rate
- Clickthrough rate
- Number of emails forwarded
- ROI
- Number of social shares
- Database growth
- Conversion rate (activity on your site generated via email)
- Delivery or bounce rate

note

ROI can be a goal of the campaign, and it can be used as a KPI.

A successful email campaign is most likely to be the one geared at retaining and creating a long-term relationship with the reader.

Know your audience! They will dictate the interactions.

7.4.2 Email Service Providers

An email service provider (ESP) is a partner who can help manage your email design and send. For bigger organisations it often makes sense to either purchase your own software and server, or partner with one. This is especially true if you are sending more than 50 emails at a time. Most ESPs are do-it-yourself services that do not manage or strategise your campaign, but will give you the tools you need to manage it yourself. MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) is one example of an email service provider that can manage the email send for you from start to finish. Founded in 2000, the tool provides tracking, support, functionality for managing subscriber lists and email templates.

There are some important questions to ask when choosing an email service provider.

note

ReturnPath and Trust-e (www.returnpath.net and www.truste.com) are both email certification authorities. They verify that your emails are compliant with international email privacy laws as well as the regulations and best practices put in place to combat spam.

- How easy is it to use? This is important if you are managing the campaigns yourself.
- Can one upload and migrate the contact list? It's important that you own your lists.
- Is the process self-service or managed?
- How does the reporting work?
- What is their deliverability like?
- Are they endorsed by email and deliverability authorities, like ReturnPath or Trust-e?
- Do they adhere to best practices for direct marketing?

7.4.3 Getting Started

1. Growing a database

Running a successful email campaign requires that a business has a genuine opt-in database. This database, the list of subscribers who have agreed to allow a company to send them emails with marketing messages, is the most valuable asset of an email campaign.

Permission must be explicitly given by all people to whom emails are sent. Companies that abuse this can put their reputation in jeopardy, and in many countries, legal action can be taken against companies that send unsolicited bulk email – also known as spam.

Growing this database, while keeping it targeted, is a key factor in any email campaign.

The database need only have one entry – the prospect’s email – but the following should also be considered:

- Name, surname and title
- Date permission granted
- Source of permission
- Gender
- Country
- Telephone number
- Date of birth
- Frequency (how often they’d like to hear from you)

Fields such as name, surname and title should be separated in your database. You should also gather date of birth as opposed to a prospect’s age – it ensures your database can stay up to date!

However, don’t be tempted to ask for more information than required. The more information a marketer can gather, the better she can customise her marketing messages. However, the more information a prospect is required to give, the less likely a sign up will occur. Further information can be requested over a period of time.

There are a myriad of ways to attract prospects to opt-in to a database. An email sign-up form on a company website is vital. Visitors to a website have already expressed an interest in a company by clicking through the website – this is an opportunity to develop that interest further. Following the same principle, any other properties where newsletter sign up can be promoted should be taken advantage of. Consider a sign up form on your company blog, email signatures, Facebook page or perhaps mention it during any presentations your staff may deliver.

Sign-up forms best practice:

- Put the sign-up form where it can be seen – above the fold and on every page.
- State your anti-spam stance explicitly, and be clear about how you value subscribers’ privacy.
- Use a clear Call to Action.
- Tell subscribers what they will get, and how often they will get it. Include a benefit statement.
- Ensure the email address is correct by checking the syntax.
- Test to see what works best!

note

Pepper and Rogers refer to gathering information over a period of time as “drip irrigation”, since it never overwhelms nor parches the prospect.

note

Opt-in and double opt-in: the integrity of the database can be safeguarded with a double opt in process. An email is sent to the email address supplied, and the user has to click on a link within that email to confirm their subscription. This means that dud email addresses are kept out of the database, and confirms that the user has granted explicit permission.

Every interaction can be used to ask permission to send emails.

- Offer something valuable for free, and ask if they would sign up to your newsletter at the same time (e.g. white paper, gift voucher, music track).
- Add a subscribe box to the checkout process of your retail site.
- Use interactions at trade shows to ask for email addresses.
- Ask for email addresses in-store
- Call out your email campaign on your social media networks, and link through to your subscription form

2. Creative Execution

Emails can be created and viewed as HTML or as text emails. Sometimes HTML emails are rendered as text emails.

note

It is becoming common for people to check their email on their mobile phones. Unless they are using a smartphone, this will often mean that the email display needs to be checked in this context.

In simpler phones, a plain text email will often be the best option for accurate display.

Text emails are the plain ones – text only, as the name suggests. If you use a Windows operating system, and you open Notepad and type there, you will be creating a text file. These emails are smaller, and plainer. As these are text only, the copy really counts here.

HTML emails are the emails with more complex design. These emails can contain images, different fonts and hyperlinks. It's probably what you've had in mind throughout this chapter when we referred to email marketing.

Given that HTML emails are likely to take longer to download and use up more bandwidth, you should give your subscribers the choice of how they would like to view your email – in plain text or HTML.

Parts of an email

Preheader

The preheader is a line or two of text displayed above your email header. Most commonly, it's the line of text that will redirect you to "View online". With more and more people viewing emails on mobile phones, the preheader is also the ideal space to redirect to the mobile version of your email. If and where possible, try including your Call to Action in the preheader. This could be difficult, given the limited space. However it does ensure that every recipient (even those who don't necessarily open the email, but only view the preheader within the preview pane or inbox) will still be exposed to it.

Header

This has the "to", "from" and "reply to" fields. These are also opportunities to build a relationship through creating a perception of familiarity. In other words, the reader needs to perceive that the newsletter is somewhat unique and sent personally by the publisher. Using a personalised company email address (e.g. trevor@companyname.com) for the "reply" field creates familiarity and builds

trust with the reader. The “from” address should also include the organisation’s name. A meaningless “from” address which the reader cannot identify only serves to confuse the origin of the newsletter.

Subject Line

The subject line could be the most important part of an email! Subject lines aid the reader in identifying the email, and also entice the reader to open it. The subject line is also scrutinised by spam filters, and so you should avoid using characters, *i.e.* #2\$%&^^%### or !!!!!. Consistent subject lines, using the name of the company and the newsletter edition, can build familiarity and help readers to sort their inbox. As with everything online, testing different subject lines will lead marketers to the formula that works for them.

Personalised Greeting

With a database that has the capability to store readers’ names, it is possible to personalise the greeting of the email. “Hi Kim Morgan” can elicit far better responses than “Dear Valued Customer”, but it is possible to create a greeting with personality without personalising it. Occasionally, the subject line can be personalised as well to boost responses.

Body

This is where the content of the email goes. Don’t be tempted to use too many images: it can increase the size of the email, and it can obscure text when images do not load. Be sure that text is not on the image, but rather can be read without an image being loaded.

Footer

A standard footer for emails helps to build consistency, and is the customary place to keep the contact details of the company sending the email. At the very least, this should include the name and contact email of the company. It can also include the privacy policy of the sender. One way to grow the email list is add a “forward to a friend” link in the footer. The most important part of the footer is a clear unsubscribe link. Some ESPs offer you the ability to also place social media sharing buttons and links in the footer, allowing subscribers to also share your email on their social media networks.

Unsubscribe Link

It is mandatory to have an unsubscribe link on all commercial emails. Interactive emails are best constructed with lightweight HTML capability allowing the email to open quickly. This helps to capture the user’s attention before he/she moves on. The structure must allow readers to scan and navigate the email easily. The length of paragraphs, emphasis through bolding and colours as well as sectioning information with bullets and borders all contribute to a well-structured email.

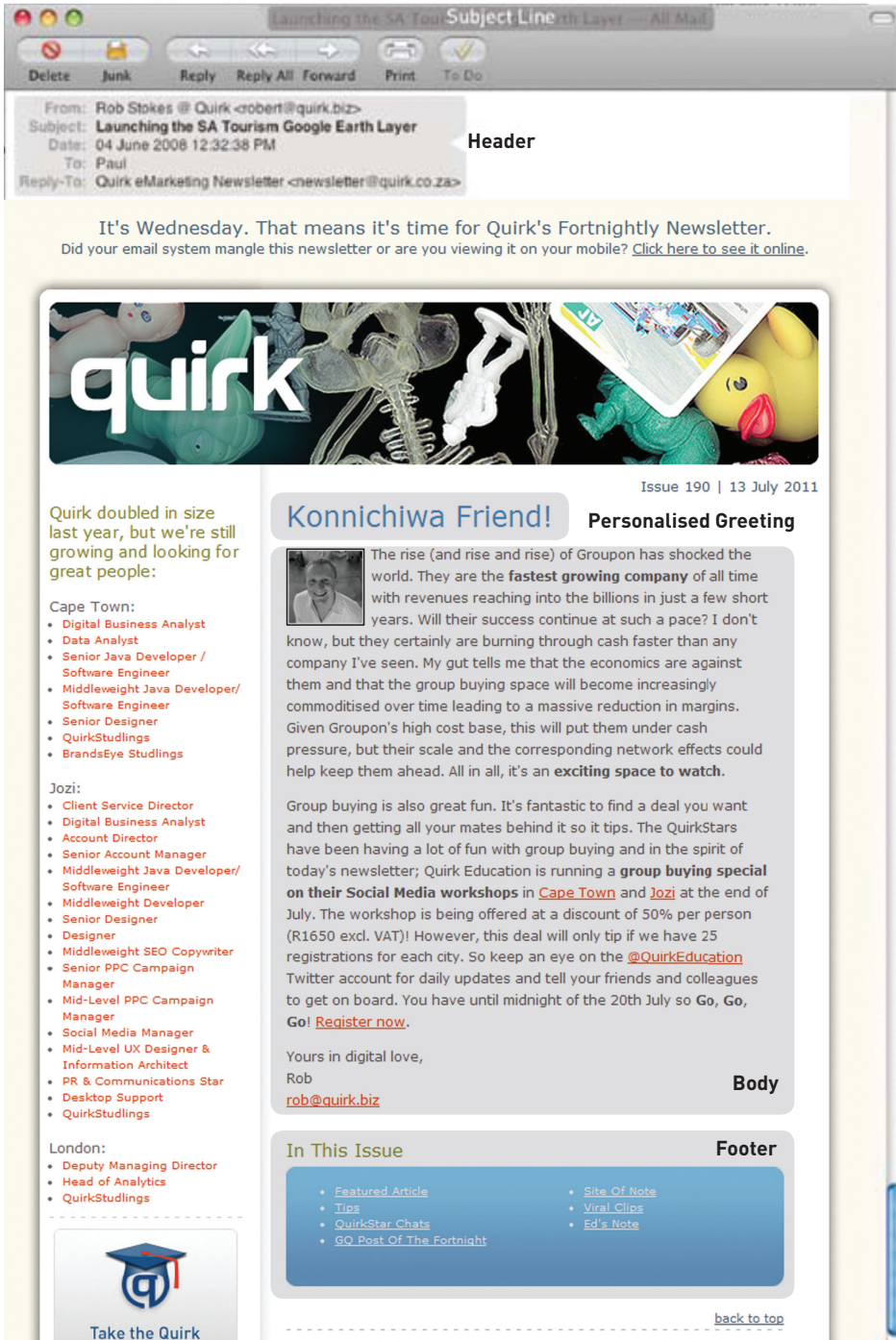


Figure 7.1 Quirk's newsletter with the different sections indicated.

Working with templates

An email template is a predesigned structure you can use for each email you send. You would only need to slot content into the appropriate sections. There

are email service providers who offer readymade templates for you to use in an email newsletter. As with website templates, bought email templates come with some benefits and disadvantages. While they are often a cheaper option for small business, they can be inflexible and generic, meaning that they will not uniquely represent your brand. If choosing a template to buy, it can be a good idea to choose the plainest one, so that you can adapt it to your brand as needed.

A custom designed email template will allow you to plan your own content structure as well as ensuring it displays well in a variety of email readers.

When having your template designed, it's important that it be tested in a number of email readers and browsers, so that you can ensure it displays appropriately. Given that many people choose to look at an email in their preview pane, this can become more challenging.

Design Considerations

How an email looks is integral to how well it is received by your database. Design also refers to how it is built, which can impact on whether the email is delivered and on how likely users are to interact with it. Some design considerations are included below. A few of these are a little more technical so make sure your email partner has these covered for you.

The look and feel

Studies have found that users read through or scan email following an F shape (Nielsen 2006). So, plan your important information to follow this flow.



Figure 7.2 Nielsen's heat maps from user eye tracking studies showing areas that users looked the most.

Source: Nielsen 2006

Cluttered inboxes and busy subscribers mean an email that's lengthy and difficult to get through probably won't be read. Help your subscribers by structuring your email content into segments, making use of borders or colour blocks to accentuate and divide content. It's important to balance image and text in your emails. You'll want to make a point of placing images next to the relevant text.

General design guidelines

HTML and CSS design principles differ for web and email. Here are a few things to keep in mind when designing your email:

- Don't make use of external or embedded style sheets and avoid unnecessary embedded rows and columns.
- Make use of table nesting as far as possible, as this is generally considered to render the best results with difficult email clients. Email designers tend to make use of tables to design their email layout, using inline styles within these tables. Keep your nesting as simple as possible, for the sake of recipients viewing it within Outlook 2007 or 2010.
- Set a fixed width for your email by specifying the width and spacing of each cell rather than the entire table. When these specifics are not declared, email clients tend to render the email according to their own defaults and can break the design.
- If you are using a block background colour, be sure to include a 100% width table to cover the entire email.
- Keep fonts in your email design larger than 9px. Anything below that becomes difficult to view in some email clients. Also bear in mind that, whilst coloured text (or light-on-dark text) might look visually impressive, it can be difficult to read an entire email and strain your subscribers' eyes. Rather limit such visual tricks to smaller sections of your email, or to emails that contain less written content.
- Make use of inline CSS - some email clients strip the CSS from the head and body of the email.
- Test your emails in a variety of email clients before you send.

Designing for the preview pane

Many email users run desktop clients with which they manage their email. Given the amount of emails people receive on a daily basis, many do not open emails but rather look at them in their preview panes. This has added another challenge for designers wanting to ensure that their emails display properly.

Images and layout should consider the preview pane and be tested for rendering. Preview panes can be vertical or they can be horizontal.

Tips for designing for the preview pane:

- There is no set width, and we reiterate testing is the way to go. A width of 600px works best for preview pane display.
- Preview panes favour the top left-hand side of an email. While each preview pane may vary according to client or user settings, the most commonly favoured preview pane dimensions cover the area in the top 300px of your email. Given the width of 600 pixels, you're then (generally speaking) looking at the top 600px x 300px of your email as being most likely to be displayed in a preview pane.
- Ensure that plain email friendly fonts are used toward the top of your email in order to ensure that the first text encountered is properly displayed.
- Consider carefully what images you display in the top section of your email, and test display accordingly.
- Placing your logo prominently within the top left of your email can ensure optimal brand recognition and exposure.
- Try to include your Call to Action in the area displayed in the preview pane. That way, even if the subscriber chooses not to read your email, they'll still see your primary message.
- Some successful email templates use the area likely to be seen in the preview pane to provide a table of contents for the email. Users know what they can look forward to by opening the email.

Email and Images

Make sure that there is alt text for all images used in the email. This ensures that the message of the image will still be communicated even if the image itself is not seen. Remember, many email clients are set to not display images by default. Your email should make sense whether or not the user enables images.

Avoid using images to convey important content. Ensure that the email copy is not part of an image. Many email clients display email with the images turned off by default, and if this is the case, the core message content will be lost.

Tips for using images in email design:

- Background images do not render well in emails. Gmail, for example, will ignore any attributes indicating a background image. However, a block background colour tends to display well across most email clients.
- When including images in your HTML, be sure to declare the height and width for each image to ensure consistent rendering across most email clients.

note

You can try to work around image blocking by embedding your images in your email. This means encoding the image in the email, rather than having the image hosted online as you would normally do. (Don't let this alarm you – your ESP should offer you a hosted online image library.) Many email clients, however, still won't display the image even if it is embedded. Doing this will also probably push up the cost of your email sending considerably as ESPs do charge significantly more per email sent when the images are embedded.

Emails which make sense without images, and render correctly across all platforms, are more likely to persuade a reader to load the images (and open the email), as well as clickthrough to the website.

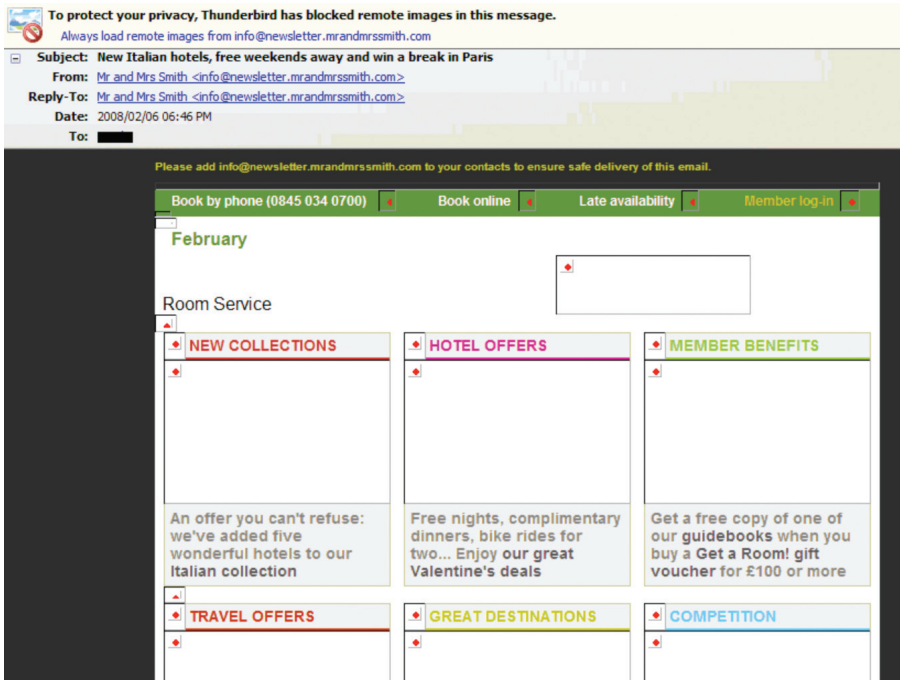


Figure 7.3 Image blocking can distort the meaning of your email, so consider your use of titles and alt text.

The Call to Action

Email design should support the Calls to Action on your email. In order for your campaign to be effective, your goals and KPIs should be supported by the layout of your design. Calls to Action can be hyperlinked text (also called text links), or can be images which look like buttons. Don't forget though, that if images are blocked, your buttons will be blocked too.

According to the Email Experience Council, 72% of email marketers vote that buttons perform better than text links (Email Experience Council 2007). While you should use buttons for links that support your Call to Action, e.g. "make a booking", "check availability" your email shouldn't be littered with buttons, and hyperlinks should be used for additional links. The best thing to do is to test them in your campaigns to see what kind of Calls to Action perform best for you.

The copy of a Call to Action is exceptionally important. A well crafted Call to Action makes a big difference to the performance of your campaign. Again, test variations to determine what drives the highest clickthrough rate, and highest conversion rate, on your campaigns.

Measurement

The design should be tested to ensure that it renders clearly in as many clients as possible. Make sure that images line up, that copy is clear and that all the links work.

Emails can be tested for platform compatibility at:

www.sitevista.com/email.asp.

Email for Mobile Phones

With the adoption rate of smartphones increasing, more and more people are viewing their emails on mobile phones. About 38.5% of mobile Internet time is used for checking email in the US (Nielsen).

This is a challenge. The mobile screen is obviously much smaller than desktop screens, and so the way an email is displayed differs vastly as well. Not only that, but different mobile devices also make use of different mobile operating systems, meaning they each have different standards and default settings, and as such, also all render emails in a unique way.

To make things even more difficult, very few people view an email on only one device. They switch from their smartphone to their laptop to their tablet and back to their mobile phone during the course of a day. This means that, although sending two versions of your email is an option (one for mobile, one for desktops) it's probably not the best solution. You want an email that displays well across as many different clients and operating systems as possible.

Some smartphones do render HTML emails and even autofit them to fit the mobile screen, however not all handsets do this.

The most important things to keep in mind when designing an email for mobile is:

- The screen is a lot smaller, and
- Mobile users are often checking their email on the run.

So, your content must be easy to skim, with clear Calls to Action.

Here are some common best practices to follow when designing your emails, to ensure optimal rendering on mobile devices:

- As previously stated, an email width of 600px is ideal. Mobile device display ranges from 320px (iPhone) to 480px (Android) and so when you keep the header image width under 600px, it still displays well on web browsers (without the need for horizontal scrolling), but also scales down to fit mobile devices quite easily. Note that, for some mobile devices, horizontal scrolling is unavoidable.

note

An email client is the software or programme a person uses to access their email. Some of these are web-based, like GoogleMail and Hotmail, but there are also plenty of software clients. As well as many versions of Outlook, there is also Thunderbird, Eudora and Lotus to mention just a few. And yes, your email could look different on each one of those.

- Host your email newsletters online and link to them from your preheader. That way, anyone who opens your email on a mobile – even those whose mobile phones display emails in plain text – can click straight through to an HTML version of your newsletter.
- Design your email in a grid system. This means your content needs to be laid out in vertically and horizontally aligned blocks, with gaps in between. Doing this will make it easier for various operating systems and email clients to scale your email down to fit a mobile screen.
- Again, make sure that you include alt text for your images! Your email needs to convey its message with or without images.
- Mobile devices that don't automatically scale your email down will display the content on the left of your email first. Make sure that your most important content is placed here.
- Button links need to be at least 44px to render well on mobile phones.

Something important to remember: **Design for touch.**

Many mobile devices have touch screens. This means that, instead of clicking on your links with a mouse, users will be tapping at your links with their fingers. If your links are placed too closely together, it will be difficult for them to click on one link without accidentally also tapping the other. To make the user experience easier, make sure your links are placed in a 30 – 45px area, with a margin of at least 15px around it. By spacing links like this, it will be easier for touch screen users to follow through on your Call to Action.

This is not a guarantee that the email will display properly in mobile, but it should solve the problem for most mobile devices (like iPhone and Blackberry) which auto-fit HTML emails.

Create Content

Email content that is relevant and valuable to readers is vital to ensuring the success of an email marketing campaign. Valuable content is informative and should address the problems and needs of readers. It is important to realise that the reader determines the value of the content, not the publisher.

Successful email campaigns provide value to their readers. This value can vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer:

- humour
- research
- information
- promotions
- exclusive content

Any copy written for your brand should follow a pre-determined brand voice guide. Consistency in this respect is important and will dictate the ways in which your customers build trust and a relationship with your brand.

A number of the principles of online copy apply, as are covered in the *Writing for the Web* chapter. You should start with the most important information first, and make sure that your language is scannable (meaning it makes use of the appropriate formatting like bolding and bulleted lists).

It may be helpful to review the *Writing for the Web* chapter at this stage, but there are two elements that are important to highlight with respect to writing for email marketing.

The first centres on **in-email links**. It's important to consider that any links you include in your email copy will lead readers away from your email. You'll want to keep these to a minimum, and only include a link when it is a Call to Action.

The second element that is important to highlight is the all-important **subject line**. Many users decide whether or not to open an email based on their first point of contact – the subject line.

For an email newsletter, it's useful to put together a recurring content structure. As you can see in the images on the previous page, the Quirk Newsletter has a consistent structure, but details are definitely experimented with and tweaked for the best results.

note

An onsite archive of all your newsletter content will show prospective subscribers what you have on offer, as well as aiding your website's SEO efforts.

You will notice that the Quirk Newsletter does not consist of entire articles in the newsletter, but rather links to the blog, GottaQuirk, where the full articles are displayed. If your newsletter consists of only one article, it may help to publish it in full. Sending out too much long content in your newsletter can be daunting for time-starved readers, and they may not make it all the way through your newsletter.

3. Integrate Campaign with Other Channels

Whilst email marketing can operate as a standalone marketing campaign, integrating it with other channels, both online and offline, will serve to both reinforce a brand's message and increase responses.

There should never be a disparity between the content, tone or design of an email when compared to the rest of a company's offerings. In-store promotions can be reinforced and promoted to an email database, or website information can be summarised for email.

Custom landing pages, as required, should be created for any promotions being communicated in an email communication. For the most part, marketing emails should aim to get the customer to the site, thus landing pages are essential. They need to be optimised to close the Call to Action. So the email gets the subscriber on the page and the landing page gets them to sign up/ buy/read more info. The idea is to create a flow between the two that brings the “selling” process full circle – whether it’s actually buying something or just reading through the content to engage them with the brand.

Email marketing and social media work very well together for cross channel promotion. Where email can create a one-on-one feel between a brand and an individual, Social Media can move that attention towards a sense of community and keep your reader involved in a dialogue.

4. Database Segmentation

The technology of email marketing allows for mass customisation – it is one to one marketing on a macro scale. Even simple personalisation can see improved results.

Customisation starts at using the recipient’s name and sending either HTML to text emails based on preference, to sophisticated measurement of a recipient’s preferences and tailoring content to suit them.

Segmenting a database can allow for customisation across demographics or purchase history. For example, you may choose to divide your database according to gender or age. A political campaign may benefit from targeting messages to different demographics. A pet store may find it useful to segment their mailing list according to the different kinds of pets their customers own. In this way it is possible to send mailers that are slightly different and tweaked to different target groups.

5. Deployment

By creating valuable content, establishing the correct frequency and testing an email for display and deliverability, an email marketer should be able to ensure an excellent delivery rate. Consistency in deploying newsletters also aids in fostering trust and fulfilling expectations. Emails should be delivered at consistent times, but the best time for best results should be tested.

When to send mails:

Common sense tells you not on Monday morning or Friday afternoon, but it varies by audience. Testing will guide you. Generally speaking the best day of the week to send emails are between Tuesday and Thursday.

Email reputation is the general opinion of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and subscribers towards a sender's Internet Protocol (IP) address, sending domain, or both. This opinion is a reputation score created by an ISP or a third-party provider. If the sender's score falls within the ISP's thresholds, a sender's messages will be delivered to the inbox. If not, the sender's emails may arrive in the bulk folder, be quarantined, or be bounced back to the sender.

How it works: There are various authentication systems that can impact your reputation score. One of these is the Domain Keys Identified Mail (DKIM) and Domain Name System (DNS). DKIM associates domain names with individual email addresses, ensuring that each organisation has to take responsibility for the emails sent that are associated with their domain. Basically, DKIM signs out any outbound emails. The DKIM signature is added to the email header and includes an encrypted code. The receiving mail server will then take that DKIM signature and verify it with the DNS system to find the matching DKIM public key. Once it has this key, it can use it to unlock the encrypted code – if the code hasn't been changed, the email hasn't been tampered with and can be authenticated and passed into the receiving mail server.

Becoming an effective email marketer requires constant list cleansing and hygiene. In fact, most lists shrink by 30% each year due to subscribers changing email addresses. Build a preference centre and send out an email once a year asking subscribers to update their details. Make sure you are diligent about maintaining a current opt-in list to achieve maximum deliverability via reputation.

Tips to help your reputation score:

- ISPs offer various senders' authentication standards such as Sender ID, Sender policy framework (SPF), and DomainKeys. Quirk highly recommends the use of these standards.
- Remember that a huge but inaccurate and outdated database is far less use to an email marketer than a tightly-maintained, smaller database. Strive to boost your database, but don't forget to clean as you go.
- Ensure email broadcast rates are not too high.
- Respond to complaints and unsubscribe requests – if someone requests to be unsubscribed, do so. If you don't, there's a good chance you'll face stiff penalties.
- Educate users about white lists.

note

An email white list is a list of contacts that the user deems are acceptable to receive email from and should not be sent to the trash folder.

An email's reputation score can be checked at www.senderscore.org.

Spam is unsolicited bulk email – it means that the recipient never gave permission to be sent that email.

If the recipient has given permission to be sent marketing messages by email, then it is not spam. Users give permission when they tick a box that says “Yes, please send me offers from your company by email”. The email address can only be provided to another company if the user ticks a box that says “Yes, please send me offers from third parties selected by you by email.”

Permission must be explicitly given to the company to be allowed to market to that user. Trying to gain explicit permission in a sneaky way will only annoy your users, and might result in your emails being marked as spam.

An email’s spam score can be checked at <http://spamassassin.apache.org>

6. Email Analytics

As with all things digital marketing, tracking, analysing and optimising is key to growth and success. Email tracking systems produce statistics in a user-friendly manner.

Key measurables for understanding the performance of email campaigns include:

- Number of **emails delivered**.
- Number of **bounces** (and this should be separated into hard bounces and soft bounces).
- Number of unique **emails opened**: an email can be delivered, but not opened.
- **Unsubscribes**: significant or consistent loss in subscribers is a key indication you are not meeting the needs of your subscribers.
- **Pass on rate**: high pass on rate (forwards) indicates that your list values the content enough to constantly share with others. Putting an easy “forward to a friend” link in every email can increase this. You’ll want to measure this link specifically. Adding a sign-up link to forwarded emails will organically grow the opt-in list.
- **Clickthrough rates and conversion**: These measure the effectiveness of an email via the links placed in the content. When a reader clicks through to a web page, these can be easily measured as a percentage against the number of delivered, opened or sent emails. It reveals which content or promotion was the most enticing for the reader.

Some metrics are more useful than others. A good example of this is the measure open rates. Emails are tracked using an image which gets downloaded, but many email desktop clients block the downloading of images. This means that people may be reading a text only version of your email.

What you should be interested in is what activity takes place based on an email. So you’ll need to track leads or actions. You can do this through link tagging

discussion

When is email an email, and when is it spam?

discussion

Open rate does not necessarily indicate whether or not an email has been read. How do you think a marketer can determine if emails are being read?

(appending tracking parameters to a URL in your newsletter). These parameters are then identified by the Google Analytics of your website, registering that the user has come to the site through your email. Google Analytics will then take the information in the tag and store it in a cookie, from which it can track the user's interactions with the site after they arrived at the landing page.

Here is a link to the Quirk website as it might appear in a Quirk email campaign: http://www.quirk.biz/?utm_source=dec01&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=digital marketing2010

The tracking parameters are:

[?utm_source=dec01&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=digital marketing2010](http://www.quirk.biz/?utm_source=dec01&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=digital marketing2010)

note

You can only do this provided you have Google Analytics set up for your website.

These can then be used to report on traffic from that email using Google Analytics.

Email benchmarks can be used as a guide to see how well your campaigns are performing, but the best way to monitor performance is to benchmark your own campaign.

Smaller lists tend to have a higher open rate, but this is most probably because they're more targeted. The overall average open rate is considered 11.2%, while the overall click rate is considered 1.6%. Overall rates are quite low due to far too many ignorant or lazy email marketers which bring down the average. It's best to look at the average open rate for your industry, rather than the overall rates. You can do this by checking the Email Stat Centre website (<http://emailstatcenter.com/>).

Once the reports have been generated, it is time to work out what the numbers are revealing, and to then use this information to improve the next email sent out.

With email marketing, split testing across a host of factors will enable campaign optimisation. Some factors to test include:

- **Open rates across different subject lines and delivery times.**
- **Optimal number of links in an email for clickthrough rates and conversions.**
- **Different copy styles and copy length.**
- **The effect of video on delivery rates, open rates and conversions.**
- **Balance of text and image ratio.**

Many email marketers neglect testing their campaigns, but in order to make sure your email marketing efforts are continually improving it's important to test variables in your campaign.

The most common form of email testing is to conduct an A/B split test. This is a test that involves sending one version of your newsletter to a specified percentage of your database, whilst sending a modified version to the remainder of your database. By monitoring the results of each send you determine which version yielded the desired results. You can, for instance, test variations of your subject line to determine which is more effective in convincing subscribers to open your email (i.e., which subject line delivers the highest open rate).

Examples of what to test:

- **Subject lines**
- **Send times**
- **Best day to send**
- **Layout**
- **Text vs. button links**
- **Database segmentation**
- **Call to Action**

Testing and monitoring your send statistics go hand in hand. It's important to analyse your results after sending to ensure you're implementing the most effective strategies for your database.

7.4.4 Rules and Regulations

There are a number of laws and acts being legislated in countries across the world to protect people from unsolicited emails and stop business from abusing communication channels. While they vary in severity according to the country, it's important to acknowledge one very important rule. If someone requests to be unsubscribed from your communication, you have to meet their request or face penalties.

7.5 tools of the trade

First up, an email campaign needs a database. A plan for growing this database needs to be put in place. Most email service providers will also provide tools for managing this database.

All emails need to be tested for email client compatibility as well as for any potential spam problems.

Email client compatibility can be reviewed at:

www.sitevista.com/email.asp

For email client compatibility, as well as mobile rendering, you can test your email at:

www.pivotalveracity.com/email-marketing-solution/email-rendering.html

An email's spam score can be checked at:

<http://spamassassin.apache.org>

An email's reputation score can be checked at www.senderscore.org

Once an email has been sent, results need to be analysed to pinpoint areas for growth for the next campaign.

7.6 pros and cons

Permission-based email marketing can give the highest return on investment of any marketing activities. Technology allows mass customisation, allowing personalisation across a large list of subscribers.

When used to foster relationships with a customer base, email marketing can go a long way to increasing the lifetime value of that customer.

Email marketing is highly measurable, and databases are able to be easily and thoroughly segmented.

However, with the increasing numbers of companies and individuals using email marketing, many consumers are email fatigued. It requires ingenuity, focus and dedication to maintain an email database and consistently deliver useful quality emails that will be read.

It does not take much for email to be marked as spam, and it can be difficult to recover from being branded as a spammer by the ISPs.

7.7 summary

Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that can render the best ROI of any digital marketing tactic. It is:

- **Highly targeted and customisable.**
- **Cost effective.**

Gaining explicit permission to send email marketing to a person is a prerequisite for successful email marketing, however all emails sent by an organisation and the individuals in that organisation can be seen as marketing opportunities.

Successful email marketing requires careful planning and testing. HTML emails need to be tested across a range of email clients, and should be tested for a spam score, before being deployed.

All email sent to a list of subscribers needs to provide an easy and accessible unsubscribe link in the email.

7.8 case study – Canadian Tourism Commission

The Canadian Tourism Commission was looking to inspire Canadians to explore their country and keep the large sum of money spent on travel within the country's borders. The campaign was a national integrated advertising campaign, incorporating print, magazine, television and online mediums (Cooper, 2009).

The online platform was crucial to the campaign's success with all creative executions driving the audience to www.localsknow.ca to upload and share photos "of their favourite Canadian travel spots and great unknown experiences" (Cooper, 2009). The creative approach was to focus on the unexpected and through the imagery, experiences and deals being offered, build pride amongst Canadians and inspire them to explore Canada (Cooper, 2009).

Email marketing was one of the digital marketing tactics used to promote the competition being run in conjunction with the campaign. The email was sent to a database of summer campaign participants and needed to engage with the recipient in such a way that it brought the essence of the campaign to life, to explore Canada.

DDB Canada / Tribal Vancouver put together a simple email that spoke to the adventurous nature of the target audience and encouraged the recipients to discover unknown aspects of Canada. The email was put together so that it was not visible in its entirety within a standard computer screen and the recipient needed to use the scroll bars to navigate to the end destination. An innovative email concept which spoke directly to the target audience resulted in many unknown Canadian destinations being discovered.

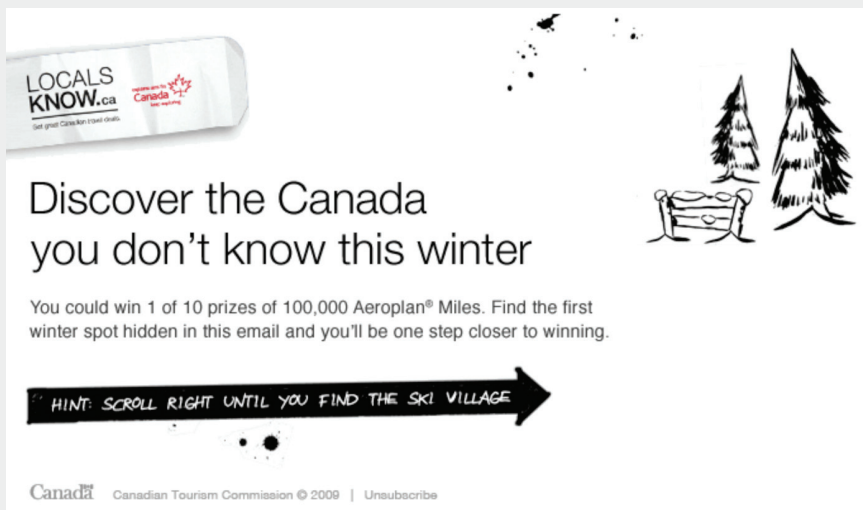


Figure 7.5 The Canadian Tourism Commission Email.

This campaign was voted as one of the top within the travel category by Forbes.com. Over the eight week period that the summer campaign ran, the website had three million page views and over 55 000 unique visitors per week. According to conversion and tracking studies, approximately 200 000 Canadians chose to holiday locally as a result of the entire campaign (Laird, 2009).

On the previous page is a screen shot from the first image that can be seen on the email: http://newsletters.canada.travel/ca/localsknows_nov2009/mailler-en2.html

case study questions

1. Why was email an ideal medium to reach this target market?
2. How did the originality of this campaign capture the attention of readers?
3. How important was market research in this campaign?

chapter questions

1. What is meant by “mass customisation” and why is this so beneficial?
2. What are the key differences between direct marketing by email and direct marketing by post?
3. Why is it important for permission to be gained before marketing by email to a prospect?
4. Emails that are expected and recognised are more likely to be read. How can a marketer use this knowledge to increase the readership of emails?

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further reading

- www.marketingsherpa.com – MarketingSherpa provides regular case studies, charts and how to guides. It is essential reading for any eMarketer.
- www.email-marketing-reports.com/blogs.htm - This one-stop resource provides guidelines, regular articles and links to other excellent blogs in the email marketing industry.
- www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/ - This blog from Campaign Monitor, a leading email newsletter software provider, keeps abreast of industry trends and best practices.
- www.email-standards.org – The Email Standards project is aimed at ensuring that emails can be rendered correctly across all clients. It also regularly tests how email clients are performing on compatibility.

What's inside: An **introduction** to online advertising, a brief **history** following the development of the Internet and an exploration of **how it works**. We look at **types of display advertising, payment models, advertising networks** and **exchanges**. We also explore **ad servers** and what they do and learn more about how **tracking** works. We **put it all together** and take a brief look at **the future of online advertising** followed by an exploration into its **advantages** and **disadvantages**. Finally we include a **summary**, a look at **the bigger picture** and end off with a **case study**.

8.1 introduction

Online advertising is a term often used to describe almost everything covered in this textbook. Simply put, online advertising is advertising on the Internet. Online advertising encompasses adverts on search engine results pages (covered in the chapter *Pay Per Click Advertising*), adverts placed in emails and on social networks, and other ways in which advertisers use the Internet. However, this chapter focuses on **display advertising**: graphical and interactive online adverts that are displayed on web pages.

Whether online or not, the main objective of advertising is usually to increase sales. As well as this, advertising aims to increase brand awareness and **share of voice** in the marketplace. Advertising is based on the simple economics of demand and supply. Advertisers aim to stimulate a consumer need (demand) and then satisfy that need (supply).

Online display advertising began as simple hyperlinked images shown on websites and has since progressed to include video, sound and many other modern technologies. Images or video carry the message and a hyperlink takes the visitor to the advertiser's desired landing page. Today, messages and interactions can be contained within the advertising display, without ever taking consumers to a landing page. Advertising, naturally, follows web-user behaviour. Advertisers want to place their adverts where potential customers will see them. This trend is resulting in the growth of advertising options using rich, interactive technology, such as games and video and social networking.

Although the Internet provides new scope for creative approaches to advertising, we see its true advantages when we realise how trackable (and therefore measurable) Internet advertising is. It is possible to track all interactions with the advert itself: how many impressions and clicks it received, post click and view data, and how many unique users were reached.

According to Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google "The Internet will transform advertising because of its trackability, not its beauty" (Lieb 2002).

8.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Animated GIF	A GIF (type of image file) which supports animations and allows a separate palette of 256 colors for each frame.
Banner	An online advertisement in the form of a graphic image that appears on a web page.

Content network	Content websites that serve PPC adverts from the same provider, such as AdWords.
Conversion	A visitor completing a target action.
Cost per action (CPA)	Refers to the cost of acquiring a new customer. The advertiser only pays when a desired action is achieved (sometimes called cost per acquisition).
Cost per click (CPC)	Refers to when an advertiser only pays when their ad is clicked upon, giving them a visitor to their site - typically from a search engine in pay per click search marketing.
Cost per mil (CPM)	Amount paid for every 1000 views of an advertisement.
Google AdWords	Google's PPC program, which allows advertisers to display their adverts on relevant search results and across Google's content network.
HyperText Markup Language (HTML)	A language read by web browsers. Certain HTML "tags" are used to structure the information and features within a web page. As an example, HTML emails usually contain graphics and can be interactive.
Internet protocol (IP) address	The Internet Protocol (IP) address is an exclusive number which is used to represent every single computer in a network.
Internet service provider (ISP)	Internet Service Provider - this is the company that is providing you access to the Internet, for example MWEB or AOL.
Key performance indicator (KPI)	A metric that indicates whether a website is achieving its goals.
Pay per click (PPC)	PPC is advertising on search engines where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.
Popup	Unrequested window that opens on top of the currently viewed window.
Tracking	Measuring the effectiveness of a campaign by collecting and evaluating statistics.
Tracking code	A piece of code that tracks a user's interaction and movement through a website.
Traditional media	Newspapers, magazines, television and publishing houses are the realm of traditional media.
Unique selling point (USP)	Unique selling point (or proposition) - what makes your offering different to your competitors'.
Viral video	This is a video that becomes immensely popular, leading to its spread through word-of-mouth on the Internet via email, social networks and other hosting websites.

Web analytics	A software tool that collects data on website users based on metrics to measure its performance.
Web browser	This is what allows you to browse the World Wide Web. Examples of browsers include Internet Explorer, Safari and Firefox.

8.3 history

Online advertising rapidly followed the developing Internet. As consumers are spending more time online, and hours spent on the Internet are eclipsing other media, the medium becomes increasingly important to any advertiser.

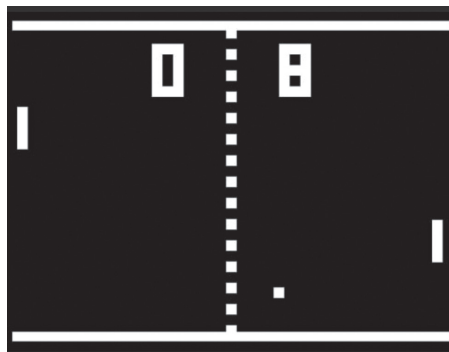
According to Wikipedia, the first clickable banner advert was sold to a law firm in 1993 by Global Network Navigator. HotWired, an early web magazine, was the first to sell advertising space in large quantities to a number of advertisers. One of the first of these was AT&T (a US telecoms company), which went online in October 1994.



Figure 8.1 An early banner ad for AT&T.

This was part of a campaign that AT&T was running to promote the Internet to consumers, and included television and outdoor advertising. Believe it or not, this was cutting edge back in '94!

In 1996, the interactive advert was born. HP's Shockwave "Pong" banner was the first rich media advert: you could play Pong in the banner. This ushered in a new wave of advertising, where users could interact with an advert without leaving the page they were visiting.



*Figure 8.2 The first rich media advert: HP's shockwave "Pong".
Source: University of Pennsylvania*

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB - www.iab.net) was also founded in 1996 and is based in New York City. The IAB, among other functions, develops industry standards such as standard banner sizes and measurement guidelines. In 2003, the IAB expanded their online advertising formats to include pop-ups and rich media expanding formats.

note

You can view these standards at <http://www.slideshare.net/VicKuP/iab-adsizes-2003>

With a growing body of standards, media planners and buyers were able to book adverts across a variety of publishers by adhering to these guidelines.

8.4 how it works

Advertising, whether online or offline has a number of objectives:

- Building brand awareness and increasing share of voice in the market place.
- Reaching new customers and creating consumer demand.
- Informing consumers of the advertiser's ability to satisfy that demand and develop brand loyalty.
- Driving direct response and sales.

Building brand awareness

Making people aware of a brand or product is an important long-term goal for any marketer. Once customers know about the brand, the marketer has taken the first step towards gaining the customer's trust and patronage. The better known a brand is the more business they can do. And the ultimate goal is to do more business and sell more of the product or service.

Online, creative advertising or banner advertising is largely visual, making it an ideal channel for promoting brand collateral. The visual strengths can be communicated well through this medium.

Creating consumer demand

Creating consumer demand is a three step process: inform, persuade and remind. Consumers can't want what they don't know about. Advertising needs to convince consumers about what they should want and why they should want it. Modern online advertising provides a great way to communicate the unique selling points (USPs) of a product, thereby helping stimulate demand and reminding consumers about the product and why they want it.

Satisfying consumer demand

Once the consumer is aware of and wants a product, they need to find out how to satisfy that desire. If brand building has been effective, they will know that a particular brand exists. At this point it is important for the marketer to show the consumer how their particular brand or product will best meet that need.

Driving direct response and sales

All forms of digital marketing need to drive traffic and sales in the long-term. However, the immediacy of online advertising also drives traffic and sales in the short and medium terms. Unlike traditional media advertising, online advertising can turn the potential customer into an actual customer right there and then. What's more, it is possible to measure accurately how effective the online advertising campaign has been in this regard.

The key differentiator

Online advertising is able to drive instant sales and conversions. Unlike other advertising mediums, the consumer can go from advert to merchant in one easy click. Because of the connected nature of the Internet, online activities are highly trackable and measurable, which makes it possible to target adverts and to accurately track and gauge the efficacy of the advertising. Each display advert can be tracked for success.

8.4.1 How to Show Your Message: types of display advertising

There are many different ways to display messages online, and as technology develops, so does online advertising. Here are some of the most common:

Interstitial banners

These are banners shown between pages on a website. As you click from one page to another, you are shown this advert before the next page is displayed. Sometimes the advert can be closed.

Pop-ups and Pop-unders



*Figure 8.3 Pop up banners run the risk of annoying users.
Source: Wikipedia*

As the name suggests, these are adverts which pop up, or under, the web page being viewed. They open in a new, smaller window. You will see a pop-up straight away, but will probably only become aware of a pop-under after you close your browser window.

These were very prominent in the early days of online advertising, but audience annoyance means that there are now “pop-up blockers” built into most good web browsers. This can be problematic as sometimes a website will legitimately use a pop-up to display information to the user.

Floating advert

This advert appears in a layer over the content, but is not in a separate window. Usually, the user can close this advert. In fact, best practice dictates that a prominent close button should be included on the advert, usually in the top right hand corner. Floating adverts are created with DHTML or Flash, and float in a layer above a site’s content for a few seconds. Often, the animation ends by disappearing into a banner advert on the page.



Figure 8.4 An example of an overlay.

Wallpaper advert

This advert changes the background of the web page being viewed. Usually, it is not possible to clickthrough this advert. The effect of these adverts is difficult to measure as there is no clickthrough, and its chief purpose is branding as the branded page will be visible so consistently.

Map advert

This is advertising placed within the online mapping solutions available, such as Google Maps.

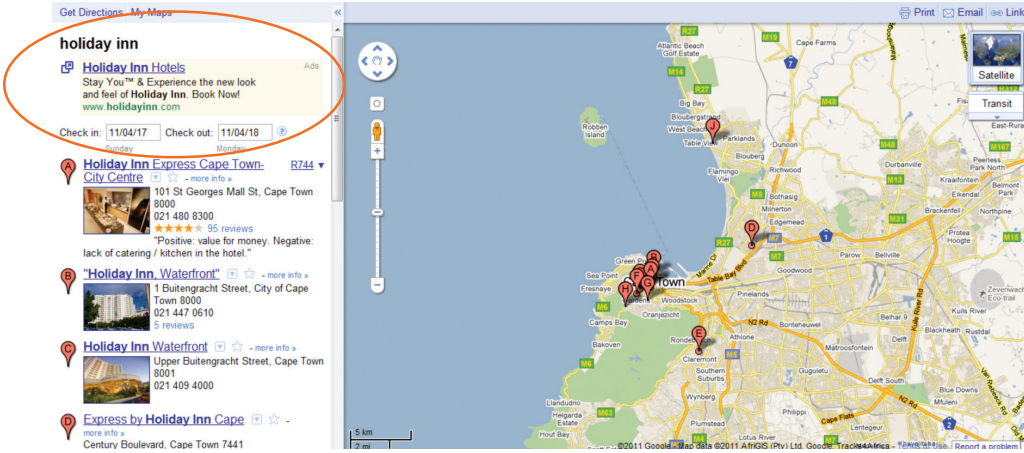


Figure 8.5 An example of a map advert.

Banner advert

A banner advert is a graphic image or animation displayed on a website for advertising purposes. Static banners are in GIFs or JPEG format, but banners can also employ rich media such as Flash, video, JavaScript, HTML5 and other interactive technologies. Interactive technology allows the viewer to interact and transact within the banner. Banners are not limited to the space that they occupy; some banners expand on mouseover or when clicked.

discussion

When online, adverts can be interactive. How do you think this can be used to increase the effectiveness of advertising?

8.4.2 Standard banner sizes

There are standard sizes (measured in pixels) for banner advertising, whether the banner be static, animated or rich media. Creating banners to suit these sizes means the banners will suit many websites (advertisers sell space in these sizes as well). And here, size (both dimensions and file size) does matter, in that you can expect varying results in clickthroughs and conversions across the range of sizes. If you want to know what works best for your brand, test.

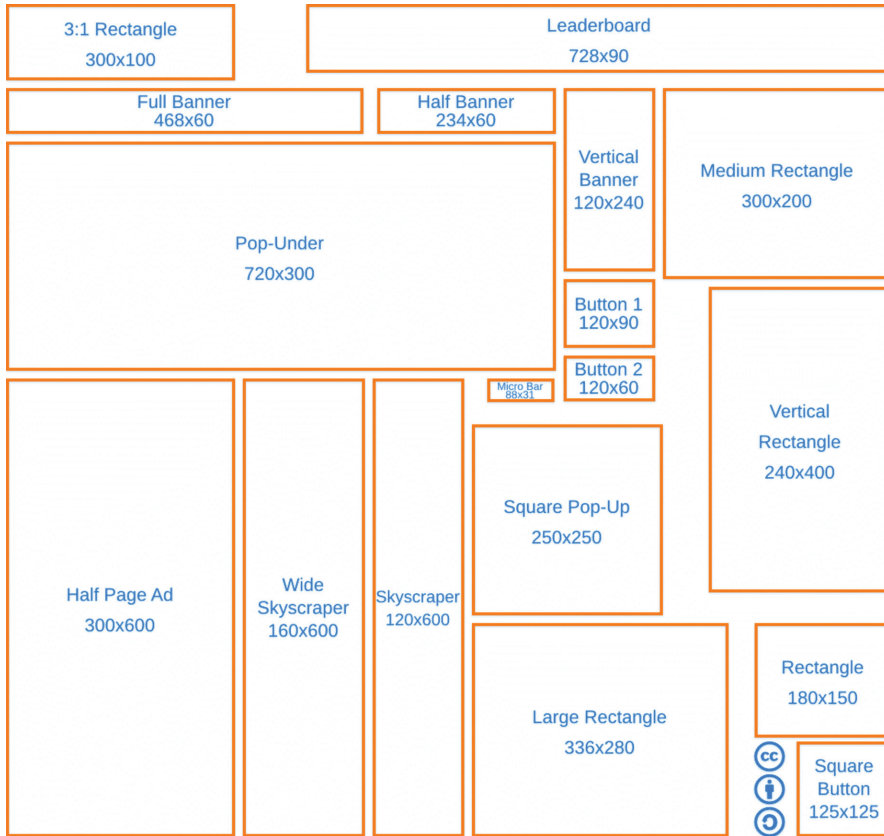


Figure 8.6 An example of standard banner sizes.

Source: Wikipedia

8.4.3 How to Pay: payment models for display advertising

As well as a variety of mediums, there are also a number of different payment models for display advertising.

CPI or CPM

CPI stands for cost per impression. This means the advertiser pays each time the advert appears on the publisher's page. The most common way of referring to this model is CPM or cost per thousand impressions (the letter M is the Roman numeral for a thousand). This is how a campaign is normally priced when brand awareness or exposure is the primary goal.

CPMs for Rich Media adverts are usually higher than for standard media adverts. This is often based on file size.

CPC

CPC stands for cost per click. This means the advertiser only pays when their advert is clicked on by an interested party, regardless of how many times it was viewed. CPC advertising is normally associated with paid search marketing, also called pay per click (PPC) advertising. Banners can be priced this way when the aim is to drive traffic. It is also a payment method sometimes used in affiliate marketing, when the aim is to drive traffic to a new website.

CPA

CPA refers to cost per acquisition. This model means the advertiser only pays when an advert delivers an acquisition. Definitions of acquisitions vary from site to site and campaign to campaign. It may be a user filling in a form, downloading a file or buying a product.

CPA is the best way for an advertiser to pay because they only pay when the advertising has met its goal. For this reason it is also the worst type for the publisher, as they are only rewarded if the advertising is successful. The publisher has to rely on the conversion rate of the advertiser's website, something which the publisher cannot control. The CPA model is not commonly used for banner advertising and is generally associated with affiliate marketing.

Flat Rate or Sponsorships

Sometimes owners of lower-traffic sites choose to sell banner space at a flat rate i.e. at a fixed cost per month, regardless of the amount of traffic or impressions. This would appeal to a media buyer who may be testing an online campaign that targets niche markets.

There are several variations to what a sponsorship on a website entails. Examples include exclusive adverts on all the pages and slots of a specific page, newsletter, or section, and sponsoring content. Sponsorship means that no other advertiser will appear in that section.

Sponsorships are often difficult to measure and are mostly used to raise brand awareness.

Cost Per Interaction

With this model, advertisers pay for rollover adverts, normally placed in videos or applications (such as Facebook applications), and based on the interactions with that advert. An interaction, sometimes referred to as an engagement, is generally defined as a user-initiated rollover (or mouseover) action that results in a sustained advert expansion. Once expanded, an advert may contain a video, game, or other rich content. It happens without taking an Internet user away from her preferred web page, and marketers only pay when an individual completes an action.

discussion

The word “engagement” implies a level of interaction and intent from the user. If you were using this type of advertising, how would you measure success?

CPM favours the publisher, while CPA favours the advertiser. Sometimes, a hybrid of the two payment models is pursued.

Typically, high traffic, broad audience websites will offer CPM advertising. Examples include web portals such as www.yahoo.com or news sites like www.cnn.com.

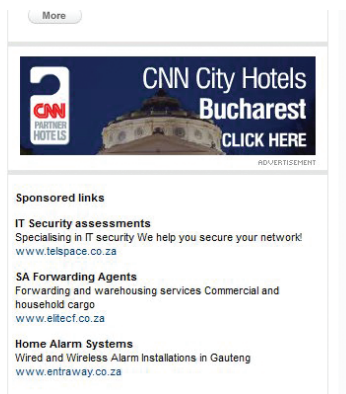
Testifying before a Senate subcommittee, Edwards cited the Zetas drug cartel as one of the leaders "involved increasingly in systematic corruption."

He did not elaborate on how non-cash methods of corruption, like sexual favors, have been used to corrupt agents.

Since October 2004, 127 Customs and Border Protection employees have been arrested or indicted for acts of corruption, said agency Commissioner Alan Bersin, speaking at the same hearing of the Senate Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon's offensive against the drug cartels, combined with a surge in the hiring of border agents in recent years, have multiplied the risks of corruption, Bersin said.

Today, the Border Patrol counts more than 20,700 agents, more than double its size in 2004. Bersin implied that the rapid hiring spree may have come at the cost of hiring less qualified agents.



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Figure 8.7 CNN.com is an example of a website that offers CPM advertising.

Niche websites with a targeted audience are more likely to offer CPA advertising to advertisers with an appropriate product. These can also fall under the umbrella of affiliate marketing.

Types of advertising can be seen on a scale from more intrusive (and thus potentially annoying to the consumer) to less intrusive. In the same way, payment models can be scaled from those that favour the publisher to those that favour the advertiser.

When planning a campaign, it is important to know how the advertising will be paid for and what kinds of advertising are offered by publishers. A lot of this can be solved by using a company which specialises in advert serving, media planning and media buying.

8.4.4 Advertising Networks and Advertising Exchanges

An **advertising network** is a group of websites on which adverts can be purchased through a single sales entity. It could be a collection of sites owned by the same publisher (e.g. AOL, CNN, Sports Illustrated are all owned by AOL/Time Warner) or it could be an affiliation of sites that share a representative.

discussion

How do you think your campaign objectives would differ if you were advertising car insurance vs. organic cat food? What sort of websites would you target for each?

The advertising network acts as an intermediary between advertisers and publishers, and provides a technology solution to both. As well as providing a centralised ad server that can serve adverts to a number of websites, the networks offer tracking and reporting, as well as targeting.

Advertising networks usually categorise the sites by channel. Advertisers pay to advertise in specific channels, and not in individual sites. Most times, the campaign will then be optimised based on the best converting sites.

Rates are often negotiated with the network, and placements are booked over a period of time.

Advertising exchanges, on the other hand, are where unsold inventory is placed by publishers for bidding. The inventory is sold to the highest bidding advertiser. Giving advertisers far more control, this type of advertising mimics a PPC based model of paid search bidding (Generalised Second Price auction) – but bids are for audience profiles and space rather than for keywords. It allows publishers to fill unsold inventory at the highest available price, and can give smaller advertisers access to this inventory.

8.4.5 Ad Servers

Ad servers are servers that store advertisements and serve them to web pages. Ad servers can be local, run by a publisher to serve adverts to websites on the publisher's domain, or they can be third-party ad servers, which serve adverts to web pages on any domain. Ad servers facilitate advert trafficking and provide reports on advert performance.

The benefits of ad servers

Rather than distribute copies of each piece of creative advertising to each publisher or media buyer, you can send out a line of code that calls up an advertisement directly from the ad server each time an advert is scheduled to run. The agency loads the creative to the server once and can modify rotations or add new units on the fly without needing to re-contact the vendors. This is referred to as third-party ad serving.

The ad servers provide a wealth of data, including impressions served, adverts clicked, CTR and CPC. Whilst publishers have their own ad servers, most of the third-party ad servers also have the ability to provide performance against post-click activities such as sales, leads, downloads, or any other site-based action the advertiser may want to measure.

Ad servers provide a consistent counting methodology across the entire campaign enabling the advertiser to gain an “apples to apples” comparison of performance across the entire media schedule, which includes multiple websites. This ensures the advertiser gets what they are paying for, and avoids fraudulent activities, like click-fraud, as a good third-party ad server should be audited.

The ad server also allows sophisticated targeting of display advertising. Examples of third-party ad servers include Double Click, Atlas and MediaMind.

8.4.6 Tracking

The trackability of online advertising is what makes it so superior to conventional advertising in a bid to boost brand awareness. Not only can an advertiser tell how many times an advert was seen (impressions), but also how many times the advert was successful in sending visitors to the advertised website (clicks). As discussed in the chapter on conversion optimisation, the tracking needs to continue on the website to determine how successful the advert has been in creating more revenue for the website (conversions).

As well as tracking adverts being served and clicked on, advertising networks can also provide information about the people who saw the advert, as well as those who acted on it. Here is some of the information that can be provided:

- Connection type
- Browser
- Operating System
- Time of day
- ISP

Many third-party ad servers will set a cookie on impression of an advert, not only on clickthrough, so it is possible to track latent conversions (within the cookie period). Simply put, not only can third-party ad servers track the post click data, but also post view data: when a user sees an advert, does not click on it, but goes to the website after viewing the advert (either by typing in the URL, or searching for the site).

And the best thing? Using this information, the ad server can target the display of advertising, helping advertisers to optimise campaigns and get the most from the advertising spend.

discussion

Why do you think knowing the connection type and browser of your users is important? Think about the advertising that might be shown in the USA vs the advertising shown in South Africa.

note

Cookies are small text files that allow a website to capture information about a user. A cookie period is the duration for which a website will store that information. See the *Affiliate Marketing* chapter for a description of cookies.

note

Privacy is a big deal, and the information collected is kept anonymous. Cookies are not only used by websites for tracking. Cookies also allow websites to “remember” a visitor’s preferences, such as language and location. Where a visitor will not accept the cookie from an advertising network, either by opting out or because their browser deletes cookies, many ad servers will rely on the IP address of the visitor to track which websites are visited. Even though the information is anonymous, there are consumers who do not like having their browsing habits analysed so that better advertising can be served to them.

Targeting and optimising

Ad servers serve adverts across a number of websites, and can track a user visiting websites using cookies or IP addresses.

This means that ad servers can offer advertisers:

- **Frequency capping:** the ad server will limit the number of times a user sees the same advert in a session or time period.
- **Sequencing:** the network can ensure that a user sees adverts in a particular order.
- **Exclusivity:** ensure that adverts from direct competitors are not shown on the same page.
- **Roadblocks:** allowing an advertiser to own 100% of the advertising inventory on a page.

The ad server can also target adverts based on the business rules of the advertiser or based on the profiles of the users:

- **Geo-Targeting:** online advertising has the ability to target markets by country, province or city, and can even drill them down to something as specific as their IP address.
- **Network / Browser Type:** markets can further be targeted via networks or browser types such as Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Apple Safari.
- **Connection Type:** users can be segmented and targeted according to their Internet connection type, e.g. whether they use broadband or dial up connections.
- **Day and Time:** advertisers can choose the time of day or day of the week when their adverts are shown. Advertisers can specify when their campaign should air, down to the minute. This usually depends on the client’s objective for the campaign or the product itself.
- **Social Serving:** websites gather demographic data about users and then serve each user with targeted and relevant advertising. For example, Facebook will allow advertisers to select specific characteristics of users who will be shown an advert.
- **Behavioural Targeting:** the ad server uses the profile of a user (built up over previous websites visited) to determine which adverts to show during a given visit. Ad servers can base this profile on cookies or on IP addresses. For example, the ad server may choose to show adverts for pet insurance on a news page to a user who has visited the pets and animals section of a general media site previously. Another way of behavioural targeting is to set up parameters to determine when a certain advert needs to be shown. For example: if the user has clicked on a banner advertising a test drive, and the user actually booked the test drive, the next time they see an advert from the advertiser, a different advert will be shown because the user already responded to the previous advert.

- **Contextual Advertising:** the ad server infers the optimum adverts to serve based on the content of page. For example, on an article about mountain bike holidays in Europe, the ad server would serve adverts for new mountain bikes, or adverts from travel companies offering flights to Europe, or perhaps adverts for adventure travel insurance.

note

Contextual advertising can be problematic. For example, adverts for the Hilton Hotel could appear next to newspaper reports of a Paris Hilton arrest. Adverts for yachts have been displayed next to coverage of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

The figure illustrates contextual advertising by comparing a news article with an advertisement. On the left, a news article titled "Shark kills man off San Diego County coast" features a photograph of a beach with lifeguards and a white truck. The article text describes a shark attack and mentions a 17-mile stretch of beaches being closed. Below the article is a "Story" label. On the right, an advertisement for South Africa is displayed, featuring a shark image and a prominent "CLICK HERE" button. The ad includes the South African flag and the slogan "SOUTH AFRICA It's possible". Below the advertisement is an "Advert" label.

Figure 8.8 Contextual advertising can be misunderstood in the inappropriate context.

8.5 putting it all together

Knowing the various types of display options and payment models available are all very well, but you might be wondering how to put this all together as you plan your campaign. The very first thing you need to determine when planning display advertising is the goal of your campaign. Are you embarking on a branding campaign, or is your primary focus direct response?

Having determined the goals of your campaign, identify the key performance indicators (KPIs) that will let you know if you are succeeding.

Online advertising is an acquisition channel. It does not require that users actively seek an interaction, as PPC advertising and email marketing do. So, it is crucial that the adverts are placed in front of the audience that is most likely to convert.

note

For more on KPIs, head on over to the *Conversion Optimisation and Web Analytics* chapter.

Investigate your target audience – what websites are they likely to be visiting? It is likely that the type of creative you may use and the payment model you follow will largely be determined by the websites that you wish to advertise on.

Niche websites with a smaller, but likely more targeted, audience will most likely charge a flat rate for display advertising, or a CPA rate. They could probably be flexible in display options that they give you, but you will need to take into account their bandwidth costs if they serve the adverts.

High traffic websites with a broad audience will usually charge on a CPM basis. They will broker their advertising inventory through an advertising network, or even a number of advertising networks.

Knowing your goals, your target audience and the format of your adverts, it's time to brief your creative team to ensure that you have the optimum banners for your campaign.

Your online adverts will need to:

- Attract attention**
- Convey a message**
- Entice action**

All advertising needs an appropriate landing page. Whether this involves creating a microsite, or merely ensuring users are coming through to an existing page on the website, ensure that clickthroughs are not being wasted. Generally, sending advertising traffic to your home page is not a good idea as it leaves the user deciding where to go next.

Animation attracts attention, but be wary of being one of seven animated banners on a website. Banners should not be considered in isolation, but rather in the context of the website on which they will appear.

Web users respond well to being told what to do, and the content of an online advert should be concise and directional. Examples include:

- “phone now for the best deals on insurance”
- “click here for fast home delivery”
- “donate now”

8.6 the future of online advertising

While we have become used to the Internet as a free medium where we can read and interact with any content we want, it is the fact that it is an advertiser's medium that keeps it free. And that means that as technologies evolve and the way we interact with content changes, so advertising follows.

Previously the level of interaction a web user had with a website could be measured by the number of pages of that website the user viewed. Now, technology such as AJAX and rich media such as video mean that the time spent on a web page can be more meaningful than the number of pages viewed. The key word here is "engagement", and technology and data analysis is working towards being able to determine how websites can quantify the level of engagement with a viewer.

A little online research will reveal plenty of commentary declaring the decline of display advertising. Increasingly, consumers are becoming both weary and wary of advertising. Clickthrough rates on banners are dropping, so the effectiveness of display advertising is being questioned by some. With the focus in digital marketing on tracking and measuring response and engagement, should a company spend money on less measurable activities such as "brand building", where they are paying on a CPM basis?

Consider this: anecdotal evidence shows that banner advertising can increase clickthrough rates on contextual adverts by 249% (Godin, 2006).

Using third-party ad servers and post impression tracking, the effect of different advertising and marketing channels on each other can be observed. Banner advertising can see an increase in search volume, for example.

What does this tell us? Measurement should take place across all channels, and no channel should be utilised in isolation. The best results will be gained through an integrated and holistic approach to digital marketing.

8.7 the good and the bad

8.7.1 Advantages of Online Advertising

Banner Ads and their Similarity with Traditional Media

Digital marketers regularly bemoan the fact that it's often difficult to educate the market about the value of Internet marketing techniques. Traditional buyers of advertising have been conditioned in a certain fashion and have come to understand advertising in a certain way.

Banner advertising goes a long way towards bridging the advertising divide. Adverts have a set size, they can look very similar to print adverts and they occupy a particular bit of real estate in a publication with a particular number of views. It's easy to understand and it does the things buyers are familiar with.

Bottom line - if done correctly, online advertising builds brand awareness and increases sales!

Images - Display can offer a rich brand building experience

Some campaigns are better suited to having images rather than the plain text of a PPC campaign (although recently PPC image and video adverts have been introduced in the USA). Consider the following types of campaigns:

- **Promoting travel packages.** What stirs more emotion - an image of a tropical paradise or the words "tropical paradise"?
- **Build a brand within a specific sphere.** Use banner advertising to brand the websites of every major player in that niche.
- **Running a competition.** Keep the target market's eye on the prize.
- **Launching an exciting new sports car with a Call to Action.** "Test drive it now" - or interactive rich media that highlight all the exciting new features as you mouseover that part of the car on the image.
- **Digital shadow.** Using banner adverts that shadow the above the line activity to drive the message both on and offline.

Interactivity

Since banners can contain rich media, they offer levels of interactivity that other forms of advertising cannot achieve. It allows your target market to not only see your banner, but to play with it too. Interaction builds a bond and improves the chances of the consumer remembering your brand tomorrow. Cognitive learning is a powerful outcome of interactive display advertising.

Modern online advertising is able to bring together a number of other online marketing tactics such as animations, games, video and Flash.

- A few years ago, Flash microsites were all the rage. Now the same functionality can exist within the advert. This includes filling in a form or playing a game within the advert, there's no need to be taken to a separate page.
- Viral Marketing: clever viral marketing games or "send to a friend" functionality from within the advert.
- Video: check out video previews or trailers from within the advert.



Figure 8.9 YouTube can be used creatively to promote different brands and products.

Measurability and Data Gathering

Banner ads, like all digital marketing tactics, are measurable. Track clickthrough rates and you get an idea of exactly how many people are responding to your Call to Action. Some publishers even have the ability to do post-click tracking i.e. you can track the user all the way to a sale if that is the purpose of the advert.

An Online Publishers Association (OPA) study revealed that of the 80% of viewers who reported to have watched a video advert online, 52% have taken some sort of action, including checking out a website (31%), searching for more information (22%), going into a store (15%) or actually making a purchase (12%).

8.7.2 Disadvantages of Online Advertising

Technical obstacles

The nature of a lot of display advertising is intrusive, so pop up blockers can often prevent adverts from being served as they were intended by the advertisers.

Connection speed

Bandwidth can also be an issue, although this is a shrinking problem. However campaigns should be planned according to demographics in determining the richness (and investment) of interaction. For example, heart disease medication is likely to appeal to the older community, with less money and slower connection speeds.

Advertising fatigue

Consumers are suffering from advertising fatigue, so while new technologies can provide great results, as soon as the market moves mainstream it can get saturated. Consumers are increasingly ignoring adverts.

Ad blockers

As well as most browsers now blocking pop-ups, there are also extensions available for the Mozilla Firefox browser, such as AdBlock Plus, that will block advertising on web pages. Technologically savvy consumers are increasingly using these methods to limit the advertising that they see.

8.8 summary

Online advertising has two main objectives:

- **Branding**
- **Direct response and sales**

The Internet allows for highly targeted and highly trackable display advertising across a variety of online media.

Some ways that advertisers can use the Internet are:

- **Interstitial banners**
- **Pop-ups and Pop-unders**
- **Floating advert**
- **Wallpaper advert**
- **Map advert**
- **Banner advert**

Advertising can be charged for in a number of ways, including:

- **CPI or CPM**
- **CPC**
- **CPA**
- **Flat rate or sponsorship**
- **Cost per interaction**

Ad Servers and Ad Networks provide trafficking, tracking and reporting solutions to both advertisers and publishers. They allow advertisers to target display adverts based on parameters, including:

- **User profile (location, operating system, browser, connection type)**
- **Behaviour**
- **Frequency and sequencing**
- **Exclusivity**
- **Context of content**

Technology allows for increased levels of interaction within an advert, and for advertising tailored to engagement media such as online videos and social network applications.

8.9 the bigger picture

Offline advertising and marketing campaigns can be adapted for an online audience, so as to ensure maximum brand exposure. It is very effective in enhancing offline marketing and advertising activity and in ensuring a wider reach.

As mentioned, online advertising can be used as an acquisition channel, reaching out to a new audience. It can be used to initiate a buying cycle and customer relationship, which then plays out across other online channels. Addressing advertising and other channels to complement each other will result in a consistent message, and optimum results. Online advertising can be used to reach a large audience, and then other digital marketing tactics can be used to further refine this audience.

Display advertising and affiliate marketing go hand in hand. Affiliate networks also act as advertising networks, allowing for advertising to be purchased on a performance basis.

When seeding new products and viral campaigns, display advertising can be used to reach a wide audience at a low cost. It can expose a campaign to many new users, and increase the chance that those who are most likely to pass on a message receive it in the first place. Display advertising also supports other advertising and marketing channels, such as search advertising and marketing.

8.10 case study: Hyundai and MediaMind

Hyundai needed a way to be present for users during their purchasing cycle. Knowing that many users begin their car search online, they decided to take advantage of rich display adverts that could cut through the clutter in combination with a search strategy.

The aim was to encourage the intent to purchase and to generate test drives at the lowest cost per lead possible. Hyundai's agency, Reprise Media, decided to take advantage of video enhanced rich media served by MediaMind in order to evoke a showroom experience and grab the attention of potential customers. The rich media ads were placed on automotive sites, with the video features drawing viewers into the experience. The influence of display on the relevant search channels was tracked as well as search and display conversions using MediaMind's Channel Connect for Search.



Figure 8.10 The rich-media Hyundai advert.

It was found that combining search and display increased the conversion rate by 127%, in comparison to search alone. The display campaign also ensured that people were using campaign specific keywords in order to conduct their searches. While 19% of conversions were triggered solely by search, 53% were triggered solely by display. Users being exposed to both channels resulted in 28% of conversions.

case study questions

1. Why do you think that combining search and display positively affected the conversion rate?
2. Think about your own behaviour when browsing online. Do you pay attention to display adverts? Is there a difference between the ones that catch your eye and those that don't?
3. What is the difference between the mindset of someone responding to a display advert and someone conducting a web search?

chapter questions

1. Online banner advertising and outdoor display advertising both use images to try to increase sales. In planning, both need to consider placement so as to be seen by their most likely audience. What are the key differences?
2. Why is display advertising an effective acquisition channel?
3. Go to www.wheels24.co.za and www.thetimes.co.za. What advertising can you find on the front page of these two websites? What products are being advertised, and how are they being advertised? What can you infer about the target market for these products?

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further reading

- www.adrants.com – Commentary on online advertising campaigns. US focused.
- www.iab.com - Interactive Advertising Board.
- www.nma.co.uk – UK industry focused advertising articles.
- www.bannerblog.com.au/ - Bannerblog for rich media examples.

What's inside: An **introduction** to affiliate marketing, the **key terms and concepts** you need for this chapter and the **history** of affiliate marketing as it emerged from the murky depths of the adult industry. We'll look at **how it works**, discovering different **actions and rewards** and how **tracking** works (as well as the cookies involved). We uncover some of the ways that **affiliates promote merchants**, how **affiliate networks** fit into the scheme of things and some handy **tools of the trade** for affiliate marketing. There is an introduction to **setting up an affiliate campaign**, **pros and cons** of affiliate marketing and of course a **summary** of the chapter, and a look at **how it all fits together**.

9.1 introduction

If you recommend a restaurant to a friend, and that friend visits the restaurant because of your recommendation, the restaurant's revenue will have increased because of your referral. This is "word of mouth" marketing. But you, as the referrer, do not see any of the cash benefit that the restaurant does!

Imagine the restaurant gave you 10% of the bill for every person you referred. They would be paying you a finder's fee for new customers. There are a number of businesses which market this way offline. Brokers for insurance products are an example, but these referrals can be hard to track. Online, they are very easy to track. This system of reward where compensation is based on referral is called affiliate marketing, and is used to describe this type of marketing in an online environment.

Affiliate marketing is used widely to promote websites, and affiliates are rewarded for every visitor, subscriber or customer provided through their efforts. Because of this, affiliates are sometimes viewed as an extended sales force for a website. Affiliates are paid for performance, so affiliate marketing is also referred to as performance marketing.

9.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Action	A specified task performed by a user, which results in the affiliate being awarded commission. Actions include purchasing a product, signing up for a newsletter or filling in a form.
Affiliate or Publisher	The Affiliate or Publisher markets the products of the Merchant.
Clickthrough	A click on a link that leads to another website.
Commission	The bounty paid by a merchant to an affiliate when the affiliate makes a successful referral.
Cookie	Cookies are parcels of text sent by a server to a web browser and then sent back unchanged by the browser each time it accesses that server. Cookies are used for authenticating, tracking, and maintaining specific information about users, such as site preferences or the contents of their electronic shopping carts.
Cost per Action (CPA)	Paid when a certain action is performed by a user.

Cost per Click (CPC)	Paid when a link is clicked upon.
Cost per Lead (CPL)	Commission structure where the affiliate earns a fixed fee for a lead sent to a merchant.
Cost per Thousand (Mil) (CPM)	Amount paid for every 1000 views of an advertisement.
Merchant or Advertiser	This is the owner of the product that is being marketed or promoted.
Referrer	The referrer is the URL of the web page that a user was at before reaching yours. The server's logs capture referral URLs and store them in their log files.
Revenue share	Commission structure where the affiliate earns a percentage of a sale.
ROI	Short for return on investment.
Session	The session of activity that a user with a unique cookie spends on a website during a specified period of time.
Traffic	This refers to the visitors that visit a website.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	This is a unique address that identifies a website.
eXtensible Markup Language (XML)	XML promises more standardised and organised delivery of data over the Internet. XHTML is the XML version of HTML.

9.3 history

Like many digital marketing innovations, the beginnings of affiliate marketing are to be found in the Adult industry. Cybererotica was probably the first to run an affiliate campaign with its CPC programme, where it would reward referrers for each clickthrough to its website.

Affiliate marketing moved closer to the mainstream, with programmes offered by companies such as CDNow (its BuyWeb programme launched in 1994), PC Flowers & Gifts.com, AutoWeb.com and a handful of others. But the story that is most well-known, and ensured that affiliate marketing hit mainstream press articles, is that of the Amazon.com Associates Program.

Legend has it that Jeff Bezos (the CEO and founder of Amazon.com) was at a cocktail party where a woman told him that she wanted to sell books through her website. She did not have the infrastructure to sell the books, but Jeff

Bezos realised that she could send her targeted traffic to Amazon.com where users could buy books, and she could get paid for each successful referral. From this, Jeff Bezos launched Amazon Associates, the Amazon.com affiliate marketing programme. Referrers are rewarded for successful sales that occur as a result of their marketing efforts. The growth experienced by Amazon.com as a result of their affiliate programme is well documented, and probably accounts for about 40% of their revenue (according to information in Amazon.com discussion forums).

According to Jupiter Research (2008), total sales generated through affiliate networks in 2008 was an estimated £2.16 billion in the UK alone. And the same report estimates that in 2012, affiliate marketing spend is to reach \$3.3 billion!

Affiliate networks, which act as intermediaries between affiliates and merchants, came onto the scene in 1996, with the launch of LinkShare and Be Free. Commission Junction, another big player, launched in 1998 and was bought by ValueClick (Nasdaq: VCLK) in 2003 for about \$58 million.

9.4 how it works

The core of affiliate marketing is a simple process:

1. An affiliate refers potential customers to a merchant's website.
2. Some of those customers perform a desired action.
3. The merchant rewards the affiliate for each desired action resulting from the affiliate's referral.

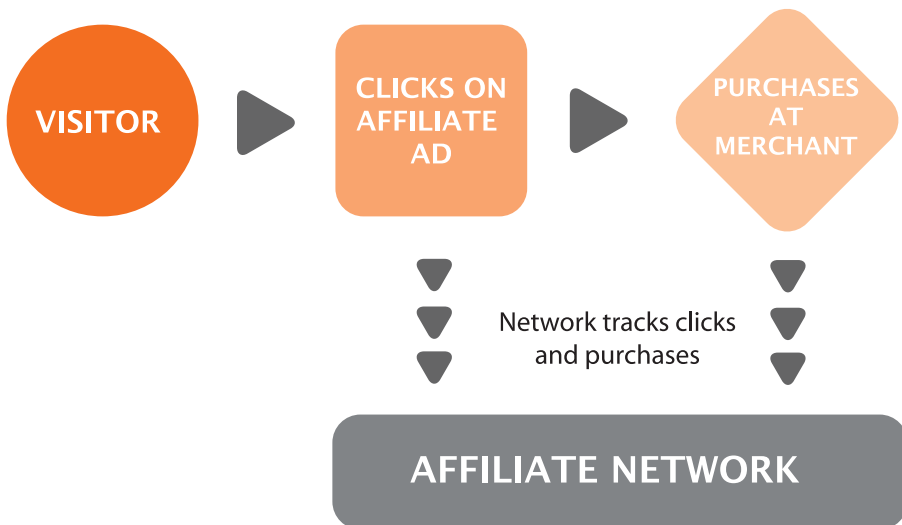


Figure 9.1 The affiliate marketing process.

However, there are many different ways an affiliate might market a merchant's offering, there are many different types of action which can be rewarded, and, most importantly, there needs to be some way of keeping track of the whole process.

We're going to take a look at the different types of action first of all, then discuss keeping track, and lastly take a look at some of the many means affiliates use to send merchants customers, and of course, to make themselves money.

9.4.1 Action and Reward

Affiliate marketing can be used to promote any type of website – there just needs to be an agreed upon action resulting in an affiliate earning commission. Different types of merchants will have different required actions. The actions and the type of commission can be summed up as:

- **Cost per Action (CPA)** – a fixed commission for a particular action
- **Cost per Lead (CPL)** – a fixed commission for a lead (i.e. a potential sale)
- **Revenue share (also CPS or Cost Per Sale)** – an agreed percentage of the purchase amount is awarded
- **Cost per Click (CPC)** – this forms a very small part of the affiliate marketing mix, and the merchant pays a fixed amount for each clickthrough to their website.

Let's look at an example of each of the first three actions above:

CPA

Here the action could be anything from downloading a white paper or software to signing up to a newsletter.

CPL

Merchants who offer CPL commissions are usually those who need to convert a lead into a sale offline. This means they will generally need to complete the transaction over the phone with the customer, or that the process is quite complicated. Typically insurance companies and banking institutions offer this type of commission. Membership sites which offer a free trial period, such as online DVD rental, can also use this commission structure.

You might be wondering why merchants are willing to pay for a lead, instead of only for completed transactions.

Well, affiliates prefer this model, as they are not in control of the offline conversion process. It is the merchant's job to be able to complete the

question

Why do you think a merchant would be willing to offer a bounty for each download?

question

How do you think companies can ensure the leads they get are qualified?

transaction. Some merchants may be wary that the leads will not be of a high enough quality. This is why they will usually have conversion targets that the leads generated need to comply with as a quality control.

Revenue share

Revenue sharing is the ideal commission structure as both the merchant and the affiliate are rewarded for performance – the more sales, the more revenue generated for the merchant, and the more commission for the affiliate. Websites where a sale can be performed instantly are ideal for revenue sharing. Online retailers and instant online travel agents are perfect examples of merchants who offer a revenue share commission. The affiliate earns a percentage of the sale.

Merchants tend to structure their commission offering so that affiliates who perform better, earn a higher commission. For example, a merchant might offer the following tiers of commission:

- 1 – 10 sales: 10% commission
- 11 – 25 sales: 11% commission
- 26 – 50 sales: 12% commission
- 51 or more sales: 15% commission

CPC

CPC commission is rarely used, and is primarily a way of driving large volumes of traffic, usually to a new site. An affiliate would be awarded commission for every clickthrough to the merchant website. Although this type of commission was prevalent in the very early days of affiliate marketing, it has been largely abandoned due to click fraud.

note

For a discussion of click fraud, see the chapter *PPC Advertising*.

We have seen that there are different types of actions that can result in commission being awarded, and that these usually suit the website that is being promoted. This means that any industry that is online can most likely be promoted through affiliate marketing.

Affiliates have many options open to them to promote merchants' websites. But before we get to that, we need to take a look at tracking – the thread that holds it all together.

mini case study: PriceGrabber

PriceGrabber is a comparison affiliate marketing websites. There are an estimated 4 200 000 unique visitors each month. PriceGrabber is listed as the 12th most popular comparison shopping website.

The PriceGrabber Storefront Program is useful for merchants who may not have websites. It allows users to buy merchandise directly from the PriceGrabber website where merchants pay on a cost per click basis.

One of the key elements that make this effective and successful affiliate marketing is the design and functionality of the website. The website is not cluttered and the design adds a sense of credibility.

The various features offered on the website make it an 'all in one' shopping platform for merchants and affiliates. The variety of categories offered such as 'Shop Green' and 'Deal of the Day' make it easier for users to find what they want and for merchants to increase their sales.

PriceGrabber have also identified new opportunities and platforms for their users by introducing free applications for both the iPhone and iPad.



Shopping Made Easy
with PriceGrabber

Available on the App Store **PriceGrabber iPad edition**

Available on the App Store **PriceGrabber iPhone edition**

Figure 9.2 PriceGrabber took advantage of the opportunity iPads and iPhones presented.

The iPad and iPhone applications allow users to conveniently access information on various products. Users can access product reviews, shipping information as well as fun features like the Gift Shaker. The bar code scanner on the iPhone application allows a user to find the product they are looking for across several retailers.



PriceGrabber Electronics > TVs > Plasma&LCD TVs

Samsung UN55B8000 55" LED TV...
\$2119.99 from 6 sellers
★★★★★ 9 reviews

oneCALL ★★★★★ \$2497.00
1486 Reviews = \$2497.00

BUYDIG ★★★★★ \$2499.00
29193 Reviews = \$2499.00

CRUICKFIELD ★★★★★ \$2119.99
6281 Reviews = \$2119.99

Home Theater Stars ★★★★★ \$2879.00
171 Reviews = \$2879.00

PriceGrabber

Toys \$\$\$

Video Games \$\$\$\$

Appliances \$

Auto Parts \$\$

Babies & Kids \$\$\$

Gift Shaker
Shake your phone or pull the lever down to find gift choices

PriceGrabber

Barcode Scanner
Scan a barcode or manually enter the UPC code below to find your product...

Use Camera

Enter Barcode Digits

Code Search

Figure 9.3 iPad and iPhone application functionality.

9.4.2 Tracking (the lifeline of affiliate marketing)

The key to affiliate marketing is being able to track the whole process from potential customers being sent to a website through to a completed action, so that the merchant is able to award the correct affiliate with the correct commission.

Specialised affiliate tracking software is used to track affiliate campaigns, and this is usually supplied and supported by an affiliate network. Often, the merchant and the affiliate will also use their own tracking software to make sure that there are no major discrepancies.

Affiliates send traffic to merchants through links or URLs, and the tracking software allows each affiliate to have a unique identifier in the URL. These links set a cookie on the customer's computer, which allows the software to track the sale.

tip

Do you want to see what cookies have been set on your browser?

For Mozilla Firefox, click on the Firefox tab > Options > Privacy and click on remove individual cookies. You can see all the domains for which cookies have been set, and you can see when the cookie will expire. You can delete cookies if you want to.

For Internet Explorer, go to Tools > Internet Options > General and click on Settings under Temporary Internet Files. Click on View Files to see cookies set, and other temporary Internet files. For Google Chrome, click the wrench icon near the top right of your screen > select Options > select the Under the Hood tab > under privacy click on Content Settings > select All Cookies and Site Data.

For example, here is the URL of a product on a retailer's website:

<http://www.firebox.com/product/1201>

Here is the URL for the same product, but with affiliate tracking:

http://scripts.affiliatefuture.com/AFClick.asp?affiliateID=238&merchantID=214&programmID=3897&mediaID=0&tracking=cube_world&url=http://www.firebox.com/index.html?dir=firebox&action=product&pid=1201&usq=AFQjCNGdHpzAasCefzDnyUBPxnaqxqvTA

You can see some of the information being recorded. It has been shown in bold in the URL:

- The affiliate network – Affiliate Future
- The ID of the affiliate (238)
- The ID of the merchant (214)
- The ID of the programme (3897) (a merchant might have more than one programme on a network)
- The media used (0)
- The destination of the click

Can you spot the original URL in the one with the tracking?

When the customer completes the required action on the merchant's website, the cookie will allow the tracking software to collect the information needed to award the commission. For example, if a customer was to use an affiliate

link to purchase a gift from a merchant (using the same URL as before as an example), the following information would be collected:

- Referring URL and affiliate
- Total sale amount for commission
- Date and time of sale
- Unique order number of sale

All this information will allow the merchant to confirm that the sale is valid, as well as the amount of commission that is due, without ever releasing any of the customer's personal information.

Affiliate tracking software collects information even if no action is completed. This is vital to the affiliates and to the merchants to see where they can optimise their campaign.

Information collected includes:

- Impressions
- Clicks
- Conversions

All this information helps to build up data in order to strengthen the campaign.

creative type	impressions	clicks	conversions	EPC
<i>banner1</i>	867	42	4	\$ 0.23
<i>product feed</i>	1150	203	5	\$ 0.89
<i>banner2</i>	305	56	2	\$ 0.21

Figure 9.4 Example of the data collected to measure an affiliate marketing campaign.

Affiliates will use this information to determine the success of their marketing efforts. Remember that affiliates invest money into marketing various merchants, and they only get rewarded on commission. An affiliate will use the above information to determine whether or not to promote a merchant, and how much they should invest in promoting a particular merchant.

Merchants can use the information on their campaign to determine how best to optimise. For example, if a particular type of banner seems to be doing better than others, they could use that to improve other banners that they offer.

How long does a cookie last for?

If you follow the steps mentioned above to see what cookies have been set on your browser, you'll notice that there are a lot of different expiry periods for cookies. Cookies are not just used for affiliate marketing. They are also used to store information so that a website "remembers" who you are next time you

discussion

What data would need to be collected? Does this differ for different types of affiliate marketing? Think of email marketing vs PPC for example.

visit it. The domain owner gets to determine for how long a cookie should last. This is called the cookie period.

When it comes to affiliate marketing, it is up to the merchant to decide what the cookie period should be. The affiliate is only awarded commission should the desired action take place within the cookie period. Some merchants make the cookie last for the session only (i.e. if the user only purchases the following day, no commission is rewarded), whereas the standard cookie period for affiliate marketing is 30 to 60 days. Some merchants offer 999 day cookies, or even lifetime cookies.

There are merchants who offer what is called an affiliate lock-in. Here, the first affiliate to refer the customer earns commission on the lifetime of the customer: every purchase that the customer makes will earn the affiliate commission.

Affiliates tend to prefer a longer cookie period: it increases the likelihood of being awarded commission.

And when things go wrong...

Successful tracking is fundamental to any digital marketing campaign, and especially so to affiliate marketing. As affiliates are only paid for performance, should anything go wrong in the tracking process, it is the affiliates that suffer. The merchant will still get the desired sales, but the affiliates won't be rewarded.

So, it is good to bear in mind some of the problems that can be faced with tracking.

Multiple referrals, one sale – so who gets the bounty?

With so many affiliates, it is not uncommon for a potential customer to visit a merchant's website through the links of many different affiliates before finally making a purchase. Who do you think should receive the commission?

For example: A user sees a banner on a website he visits promoting a weekend in Paris, booked with Eurostar. The user clicks on that banner and checks out the deals on the Eurostar website. A cookie is set, as the first website is an affiliate of Eurostar.

He doesn't book right away, but after chatting to his girlfriend, they decide to book the trip. He goes to Google, searches for "Eurostar weekend in Paris", and clicks on one of the PPC adverts. This has also been placed by an affiliate, but a different one.

This time he books the trip. But, which affiliate should be rewarded the commission?

It has become standard practice that the most recent referral is awarded the commission, though there are some merchants who also offer compensation to other affiliates involved in the sales process. In the example above, the affiliate who placed the PPC advert would get the commission for this sale.

Cookies getting a bad reputation

Consumers sometimes get anxious when they hear things like “tracking” and “collecting information”, and so they delete cookies from their computer. If this happens, then the sale will never be attributed to the affiliate. This practice, however, does not seem to have a drastic effect on numbers, and so most affiliates will calculate this into their ROI.

Clashing cookies

Merchants will often use some kind of tracking so that they can better optimise their own marketing efforts. Or, a merchant may make some kind of technical change to their website. It is crucial that any of these changes are tested first with the tracking software, to make sure that it does not create any conflict. It is generally accepted practice that even if it is a merchant’s marketing effort that is responsible for the final sale, the affiliate still gets the commission if it is within the affiliate’s cookie period.

Placing an order by another method

If the customer completes the action, but does not do so online, the affiliate will not receive commission. So, if a customer visits an online retailer through an affiliate link, but places an order over the phone, the affiliate will miss out on commission.

discussion

Bearing the above in mind, do you think there is an advantage to a 999 day cookie? What is the difference between a 999 day cookie and a lock-in?

9.4.3 How Do Affiliates Promote Merchants?

Affiliates are digital marketers who are paid on a performance basis. Every type of marketing strategy will be found in the affiliate world, and affiliates can often be seen at the forefront of breaking technology and applying it to marketing strategies.

The basic aim of an affiliate is to send targeted traffic (that means customers who are very likely to perform the desired action) to a particular merchant’s website. Affiliates may promote as many merchants in as many industries with as many tactics as they wish, but usually affiliates will start to specialise.

Most of the tactics will be the same as those that the merchant employs, but will reach a different part of the Internet population. Effective tracking takes care of any overlap, and will help a merchant to adjust their spending for the most effective ROI.

The main types of affiliates can be broken up as:

- [Personal websites](#)
- [Content and niche sites](#)
- [Email lists](#)
- [Loyalty sites \(points or cash back or charitable donations\)](#)
- [Coupon and promotions sites](#)
- [Comparison shopping \(see also PPC advertising\)](#)
- [Search affiliates \(search arbitrage\)](#)

Affiliate marketing came to the fore as a way for personal websites to make money, though this now forms a small part of the marketing mix. Affiliate marketing does still provide some income for these websites. However, we will focus on those endeavours which are created purely for affiliate marketing.

Content and niche sites are websites created specifically around a topic, and any products promoted will carry affiliate tracking. For example, an affiliate might create a site dedicated to digital cameras, with tips and downloads to help you get the most out of your camera. It could review a number of different cameras, and offer links to purchase those cameras online. All of those links will be affiliate links.

Seasonality is also a key time for content sites. Websites can be created specifically for Christmas, Mother's Day and many more key retail seasons.

Some affiliates run large opt-in email lists, and they market particular merchant offers through their email newsletters. Some renegade affiliates would use spam email to promote merchant offers, but as affiliate marketing has matured, there are usually terms and conditions to prevent such promotion.

As affiliates earn a percentage of a sale, some affiliates "split" this with the customer and create cash back or points based shopping sites. There are also some that donate a percentage of the commission to a charity.

mini case study: COUPONS

Coupon-focused affiliate marketing is very common in the digital marketing space. However, this can be perceived as cheap and untrustworthy. COUPONS is one such website offering this form of service.

The website is designed with several coupons on offer. Users can 'clip' the coupon, share it, like it, print it and even tweet it. This website has been optimised with these strong Call to Actions, which entice users to take action. The coupons are informative and the calculator in the top right hand corner of the website updates how much the user is saving.

The screenshot shows the COUPONS.com website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'COUPONS', 'LOCAL COUPONS', 'COUPON CODES', 'MEMBER CENTER', and 'MORE'. A search bar prompts users to 'Enter your zipcode'. A 'DAILY DEAL' banner offers up to 90% off on family fun, sports, restaurants, events, and more. The main content area is titled 'Coupons' and states 'We have 148 Free Coupons for you today.' A featured 'OFFER of the WEEK' is for Nestlé Cherry Raisinets, offering a \$1 discount. Below this, a grid of coupons is displayed, each with a product image, a savings amount, and a 'CLIP' button. Examples include:

- SAVE \$1.00 on Nabisco Multi-Pack products.
- Free Clorox Liquid Bleach Clorox 2B with purchase of 45 oz. Clorox 2B product or Larger.
- Save \$2.00 Clorox 2B on any size Liquid Clorox 2B Stain Fighter and Color Booster.
- Save \$1.00 Dixie on any TWO (2) packages of Dixie® or Dixie Ultra® paper plates.
- Save \$1.00 on TWO Big G Cereals when you buy any TWO BOXES Cheerios® cereals listed: Original Cheerios®, Honey Nut Cheerios®.
- \$1 off Eggo® with purchase of two Kellogg® Eggo® frozen items - Waffles - Pancakes (Only Valid at TARGET).
- SAVE \$1.50 DIGIORNO on any ONE (1) package of DIGIORNO Pizza & Breadsticks.
- Save \$.45 on SIX Yoplait when you buy SIX any variety Yoplait® Yogurt cups (includes Original, Light, Thick & Creamy, O...).
- Save \$1.00 OSCAR MAYER on TWO (2) packages of any OSCAR MAYER Hot Dogs.
- \$.50 OFF ACTIVA® on any 4-pack of ACTIVA® ACTIVA® Light, ACTIVA® Drinks, ACTIVA® Fiber or any ACTIVA® 24 oz.

 The page also features a sidebar with category filters (e.g., Automotive, Beverages, Books & Magazines), local coupon centers (General Mills, HealthCare), and a testimonial from Mike W. of Palm Beach Gardens, FL. A 'SUPERSAVER MEMBERS' section at the bottom encourages signing up for weekly alerts. The footer contains legal disclaimers, social media links, and accreditation logos from TRUSTe and BBB.

Figure 9.5 Printable coupons add to the offline experience.

What makes this affiliate marketing program unique is that the users can print the coupons. This form of affiliate marketing provides users and merchants with both online and offline experience. Therefore, not only do merchants earn returns when a coupon is clicked on, but also when they are printed.

This is an example of a website which truly has the user experience in mind, and makes online coupon shopping fun!

note

Arbitrage is the practice of taking advantage of a price differential between two or more markets. It's a term that is usually used in financial trading. Some might say that search affiliates trade in PPC adverts - their revenue is the EPC : CPC.

Some of the most successful affiliate marketers are those who promote various merchants through paid search: PPC advertising on search engines. As these affiliates seek to find the highest Earnings per Click (EPC) for the lowest Cost per Click (CPC), this is also referred to as search arbitrage.

Affiliates will find any means possible to promote offers. As new products and platforms become available, marketers and affiliate marketers find new ways to make them work. Some other examples of affiliates promoting merchants include:

- Toolbars and other browser extensions
- Social network applications

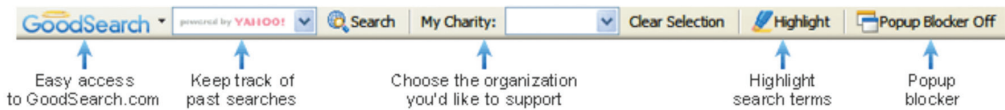


Figure 9.6 GoodSearch.com offers a toolbar. Proceeds from affiliate links are shared with charities.

All that is required is that the clickthrough to the merchant's website is tracked.

9.4.4 Affiliate Networks

As well as the affiliate and the merchant, there is generally a very important third-party in the affiliate marketing mix – the affiliate network.

While some small affiliate programmes and some very large affiliate programmes (such as Amazon Associates) are run by the merchant, most merchants opt to use an affiliate network to provide most of the technical solutions required for an affiliate programme.

Affiliate networks provide tracking solutions, reporting on programmes to both affiliates and merchants, hosting of creative banners, commission payment options and support to both affiliates and merchants. Affiliate networks have many affiliates, and many merchants, signed up to them, so they are an ideal source for recruiting affiliates if you are a merchant, or for finding merchants to promote if you are an affiliate. To the merchants, they provide a one-payment solution, as the merchant will be invoiced for all the commission collectively owed, which is then dispersed to the affiliates.

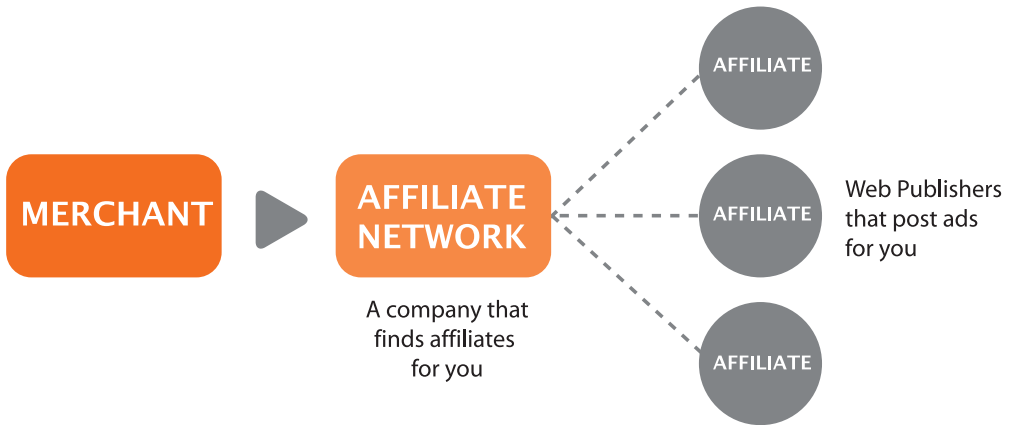


Figure 9.7 Affiliate networks act as a gateway between merchants and affiliates.

Affiliate networks usually charge the affiliates nothing to join. They can charge a merchant a set-up fee, which will cover the cost making sure that the tracking solution is successfully integrated, and can charge a monthly management fee, depending on the level of support offered to the merchant. Affiliate networks usually charge the merchant a percentage of the commission earned by the affiliate (called a commission override), so that there are incentives for the networks if they perform well. As a rough guide, this is typically 30% of the commission rewarded to the affiliate.

Some leading affiliate networks are:

- Commission Junction - www.cj.com
- LinkShare - www.linkshare.com
- Affiliate Window - www.affiliatewindow.com
- TradeDoubler - www.tradedoubler.com

9.5 tools of the trade

Affiliate marketing today forms a fundamental part of most online retailers' strategies. So, what tools does a merchant need to have a successful programme?


Any retailer should have a **product feed**, either XML or CSV. A product feed basically is a way of providing information about the products on a merchant's website in a way that breaks up the information easily, and is standardised. A product feed will probably contain the following information for each product:

- Product name
- Product URL
- Product picture

- Product price
- Description
- Shipping price
- Stock status: in stock / out of stock

Affiliates, particularly search affiliates, can then use this to promote individual products.

A product feed is made available on a simple URL, and displays content that affiliates can use in their campaigns. You can view a product feed by visiting <http://www.jr.com/category/audio/accessories/musical-instruments/pedals-and-effect-processors/pedals/n/4294563327/>

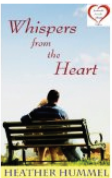

 Subscribe to this feed using Live Bookmarks

Always use Live Bookmarks to subscribe to feeds.
 Subscribe Now

running: Recently tagged products at Amazon.com

Products on amazon.com which have recently been tagged "running". Please note that product prices and availability are subject to change. Prices and availability were accurate at the time this feed was generated; however, they may differ from those you see when you visit Amazon.com

[Whispers from the Heart: A Novel \(Journals from the Heart\) \(Kindle Edition\) recently tagged "running"](#)
 11 August 2011 4:21 AM




Whispers from the Heart: A Novel (Journals from the Heart) (Kindle Edition)
 By Heather Hummel

[Buy new:](#) \$0.99

Customer tags: [journal writing](#)(11), [relationships](#)(11), [chick lit](#)(11), [women s lit](#)(10), [running](#)(10), [finding love](#)(9), [chick-lit](#)(9), [colorado](#)(9), [journals and notebooks](#)(8), [heather hummel](#)(8), [love story](#)(3), [second chance](#)(3)

[The Stick The Footweel \(Misc.\) recently tagged "running"](#)
 12 September 2009 10:41 PM



The Stick The Footweel (Misc.)
 By The Stick

[Buy new:](#) \$20.99
[11 used and new](#) from \$20.98
 Customer Rating: ★★★★★

Customer tags: [running](#)(5), [massage](#)(4), [plantar fasciitis](#)(3), [muscle relief](#)(3), [foot pain](#)(3), [physical therapy](#)(3), [foot massage](#)(2), [the stick](#)(2), [running injuries](#), [myofascial pain](#), [pain relief](#), [massage therapy](#)

Figure 9.8 An example of a product feed that can be seen on the Amazon.com site.

Merchants need to create a set of **banners and buttons** that can be placed on affiliate websites. At a minimum, the following sizes should be available:

- 468 x 60 (banner)
- 125 x 125 (square)
- 120 x 60 (button)
- 120 x 600 (skyscraper)

Having interactive banners, such as gift wizards or product searches, mean that potential customers can interact with the brand before they even come through to the merchant's website!

If the merchant or the affiliate network hosts the banners, these can be updated without the affiliates having to do anything! This means that the message can be kept current across all of the merchant campaigns.

Merchants need to consider who will be **monitoring and driving the success** of the affiliate campaign. Merchants might be able to run the programme in-house with current staffing resources, or can hire an affiliate manager. It is also possible to outsource the management of the affiliate programme to an agency that specialises in affiliate marketing.

Lastly, merchants need to **keep in touch** with their affiliates: the networks have channels for communicating with a large number of affiliates, but it is also worthwhile to interact on some of the affiliate marketing forums in order to keep informed.

What tools does an affiliate need?

Affiliates need to get to grips with **the spectrum of digital marketing tactics**, and choose what works best for them. Paid search affiliates will focus on PPC tactics, while affiliates running bespoke websites will probably put a lot of energy into SEO. It depends on where their talent lies, and where they see a gap in the market.

For affiliates, keeping up to date with merchants, other affiliates and the industry is probably the key to growth. That, and finding the time to put it all into practice! **Joining forums** and keeping tabs on industry leaders will help to do just that.

Some notable affiliate marketing Forums:

- Webmasterworld: www.webmasterworld.com
- Affiliates4U forum: www.affiliates4u.com

9.6 setting up a campaign

Affiliate marketing is forming an integral part of digital marketing – how would you go about setting up and launching a new campaign? Affiliate marketing should grow your business, and grow with your business, so it's important to plan and prepare for long lasting success.

First, you need a clear idea of your business's identity, goals and unique selling points. No doubt you will have competitors that affiliates already promote; you need to be able to give affiliates compelling reasons why your programme is better.

With this in mind, you need to determine the goal of your affiliate marketing. If you are a new business, you might just want to build traffic and brand awareness. Depending on what industry you are in, your goal could be new customer leads, or it could be increased retail sales. Make sure you are clear on what you want, and that your website reflects this.

Then, you need to decide whether you are going to run your own programme, from affiliate recruitment to tracking and paying, or whether you are going to use an affiliate network. If you are using an affiliate network, you'll need to do your homework on the best network or networks to join. Look at:

- Where your competitors are.
- Who has the kind of affiliates you want.
- What the joining fees and monthly fees are.
- How much support they can offer you.
- What countries the network is in.

You'll also need to decide whether you will hire an affiliate manager to run your programme, whether you might outsource your programme management, or whether you already have the resources to run the programme yourself.

You need to do a full competitor analysis, focusing on your competitors' affiliate programmes. Look at:

- Commission tiers
- Cookie periods
- Creative offerings
- Which affiliates they work with
- Networks
- Incentives offered to affiliates

Prepare the basics that you'll need to start a programme:

- Product feed
- Banners and other creative offerings

Using your competitor research, decide on commission, commission tiers, cookie period and incentives.

Test the tracking software on your site, and make sure that it does not conflict with any other tracking you are using.

Recruit affiliates: use your competitor analysis to contact potential affiliates, promote your programme through affiliate forums, use your affiliate network contact channels to approach affiliates and approach sites that you think fit your user demographic.

And it doesn't all stop once you've launched! The key to successful affiliate marketing is ongoing communication with and marketing to your affiliates. You need to make sure you are on top of validating sales, so they get their commission. You need to ensure that you stay competitive with your commission offering. And, you need to keep your affiliates up to date with any information that could make them send more customers your way – more revenue for you and thus more cash for them!

9.7 pros and cons

While affiliate marketing certainly deserves increasing recognition for its key role in growth, it is still a young industry with all the growing pains that that involves.

What is holding people back?

- **There are seldom contracts in place between affiliates and merchants.** For a merchant, this means an affiliate could decide to stop promoting your programme, with no notice given. This could lead to a sudden traffic and sales drop, depending on how reliant the merchant had been on that affiliate. Similarly, merchants may decide to terminate a programme, meaning a loss of revenue for affiliates. Particularly if little notice is given, affiliates might have spent time and money setting up promotions, only to have the campaign pulled out from underneath them. Most infamously, ASOS.com did this a couple of years ago.
- **There is still little to no industry regulation,** though the majority of the industry does strive to best practices. While some affiliates have resorted to shady practices in the past (with adware and email spam), the majority have banded together to blacklist this kind of behaviour.
- **Some merchants fear a loss of brand control.**
- **Affiliate programmes are not easily scalable.**

But, of course, there are so many benefits to affiliate marketing:

- **It's pay for performance marketing, so merchants are only paying for growth.**
- **The merchant sales force just got bigger, as well as its branding potential.**
- **There is a very low barrier to entry for both affiliates and merchants.**

9.8 summary

Affiliate marketing is a key tool for any website seeking growth. In this performance based marketing, merchants reward affiliates commission for successful referrals.

There are different types of commission, based on the merchant's industry:

- CPL
- CPA
- Revenue share
- CPC

The most essential element to affiliate marketing is tracking. Tracking software places a cookie on a user's browser when that user clicks on an affiliate link. The cookie period is determined by the merchant. If the user performs the desired action within the cookie period, the affiliate is awarded commission.

Affiliate networks are often used as an intermediary between affiliates and merchants. Affiliate networks provide tracking solutions, reporting and support to both affiliates and merchants.

Affiliates use a number of means to promote merchants. These include:

- Personal websites
- Content and niche sites
- Email lists
- Loyalty sites (points or cash back or charitable donations)
- Coupon and promotions sites
- Comparison shopping (see also PPC advertising)
- Search affiliates (search arbitrage)

One of the keys to successful affiliate marketing is ongoing communication between merchants and affiliates.

9.9 the bigger picture

As affiliates are marketing in an online environment, every one of the tactics in this book will be employed by affiliates. Some affiliates even run affiliate marketing campaigns for their own websites!

But as a merchant, how does affiliate marketing fit into the overall marketing mix?

For starters, affiliate marketing can allow merchants to add elements to their digital marketing with a fixed CPA. As an example, a merchant might want to promote their products through **PPC advertising**, but lacks the expertise

to run a campaign. Instead of paying an agency, the merchant can recruit search affiliates to run PPC advertising, and the merchant will only ever pay for performance.

Working closely with affiliates, merchants can get many more case studies for **analysing and optimising their websites**, particularly when it comes to conversion. As affiliates are paid for performance, they will be more than willing to advise on ways to improve conversion rates.

Affiliate marketing can be used to complement other campaigns, whether they be offline or online. Making sure that there are banners to support these campaigns, the merchant can ensure a wider audience for their other marketing efforts.

Affiliate marketing allows for targeted traffic from niche websites. While the merchant can focus on a broad spectrum of websites, affiliate marketing allows for the targeting of niche traffic sources.

9.10 case study: TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor was founded in 2000 as a small community where users can share content, but its popularity has grown beyond expectation with more and more services being offered to the community. TripAdvisor can be described as an all inclusive affiliate marketing website. The website offers comparison, content and cash back features for the users. Users can obtain information on hotels, flight and also destination packages. According to the TravelStyles USA Study, 75% of people traveling to Asia are influenced by the reviews on TripAdvisor. This makes it a very valuable resource in the affiliate marketing network.

The screenshot shows the TripAdvisor website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the TripAdvisor logo and tagline "World's most trusted travel advice™". Below this is a search bar with a "Search" button and a link to "Over 35 million trusted traveler reviews & opinions". The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Plan the Perfect Trip:** A sidebar with links to Hotels, Flights, Restaurants, Things to Do, Cruises, Vacation Rentals, and Forums.
- Find Hotels Travelers Trust:** A search form with fields for City, Check-in (7/16/2010), Check-out (7/18/2010), and Adults (2). A "Find Hotels" button is visible.
- Rants & Raves: The best and worst revealed:** A section featuring user reviews. Two reviews are shown:
 - The Surrey:** "New York City, New York" with a rating of 4.5 stars. Review: "Little touches made us feel special, and not like".
 - Ramada Maingate West:** "Kissimmee" with a rating of 3.5 stars. Review: "Basically, we just tried to spend as much time".
- Advertisement:** A banner for a restaurant with the text "EXPECT THE BEST RETURNS ON YOUR STAY!".
- Another Advertisement:** A speech bubble saying "Mmm, Berthillon ice cream... Paris! Should I miss?"

Figure 9.9 TripAdvisor is a community where people share travel reviews.

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/>

There are approximately 47 million visitors each month on the TripAdvisor Media Network. The TripAdvisor brands have the larger share, with approximately 35 million unique users, 15 million members and more than 35 million reviews and opinions. In addition, TripAdvisor have coverage of more than a million travel destinations worldwide which increases its scope as an affiliate marketer. Not only does TripAdvisor cover an estimated 400 000 hotels, but this is across an astonishing 68 000 cities. What makes this affiliate marketing platform even more successful are the 34 awards under its belt by some top brands such as Forbes and Webby.

The TripAdvisor Affiliate Program provides advertisers with a platform to show case their product to a global community. Businesses also get an opportunity to earn 50% commission on their sales. The incentive programs offered by TripAdvisor also improve the Affiliate Program for a business. In addition, the linking to over 500 000 cities and hotel pages increases the reach of the network. Not to mention, the creative linking and offering in terms of text links, image and video creative provides a variety of options for advertising purposes. These links can also be targeted to certain geographical locations, which provide an added advantage for the merchant. Merchants also have access to 24/7 real time statistics on their adverts through Commission Junction and information on the revenue earned is updated daily.

TripAdvisor are moving with the trends though with their new mobile website and Facebook applications and features.

This affiliate marketer has been able to develop trust and credibility which is what makes it one of the most successful affiliates to date.

case study questions

1. What differentiates TripAdvisor from other Affiliate Marketing Sites?
2. What makes TripAdvisor an affiliate site?

chapter questions

1. What factors should be considered when determining what commissions should be when you are planning an affiliate campaign? How do these differ for revenue sharing campaigns and CPA campaigns?
2. What is the difference between a lifetime cookie and a lock-in cookie? How do you think lock-in cookies affect the commission levels offered by merchants?
3. Why do you think some affiliates run affiliate programmes for their own websites?
4. How can a merchant try to ensure that their own marketing efforts do not overlap with affiliates'? Why would a merchant want to reduce overlap?

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further reading

- www.AffiliateProgramAdvice.com – affiliate advice from a team headed by Jess Luthi who has been in the affiliate marketing industry since its start in the UK.
- <http://blog.affiliatetip.com/> – a blog from Shawn Collins, an affiliate since 1997 and founder of Affiliate Summit, the leading industry conference.

What's inside: We look at the difference between **paid** and **organic** search results and look through the **key terms** and **concepts** that will help you understand this relationship. You also learn how to get the most out of your **search engine marketing** and **pay per click advertising**.

10.1 introduction

Every day, all around the world, millions of people use search engines to find content on the Internet. Search engines are web-based programs which index the web and allow people to find what they are looking for. “Search” or “search marketing” is often used to refer to the industry that has built up around search engines.

Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft’s Bing are all well-known search engines. Google is the largest player globally, though dominance varies by region and is under threat from new players to the market. Based on data accessed in July 2011 Google has 85.72% of the search market globally.

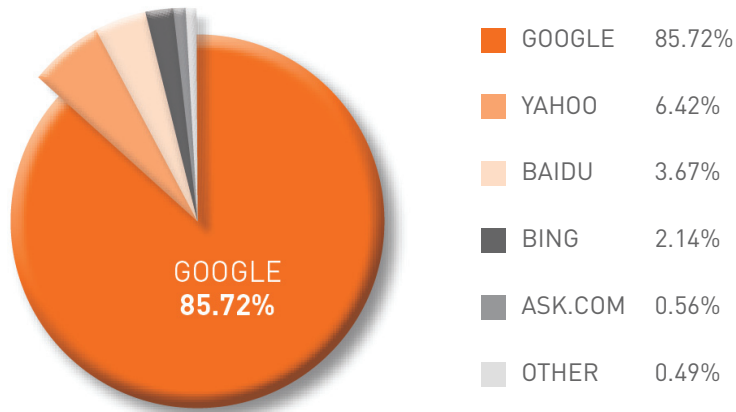


Figure 10.1 Global search market share.

Source: (statistics only - Karma Snack)

When we talk “search”, we refer to two different kinds of results:

Organic search results

Organic search results are the primary product of a search engine. These results are the listings generally found on the left hand side on the search engine results pages (SERPs). They are not influenced by financial payment and are therefore also called natural search results. Organic search results need to be consistently reliable to attract (and keep) users. Google’s growth and success as a search engine can be directly linked to its superior search algorithm which returns highly relevant organic results.

Paid search results

Paid search, also known as Pay per Click (PPC) advertising, involves the displaying of sponsored results alongside the organic results. Advertisers bid for placement, and pay the search engine when their advert is clicked on.

Paid search results must be distinguished from organic results since paid placement introduces bias. PPC adverts are usually displayed at the top and on the right side of the SERPs. Search engines attract and keep users through organic search, but they make most of their money from paid search.

Figure 10.2 An image showing organic and paid search results.

10.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Above the fold	The content that can be seen on a screen without having to scroll down.
Algorithm	When it comes to search, a search engine's algorithm is its set of rules for computing ranking.
Browser	An application used to access the Internet. Popular browsers include Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Apple Safari.
Index	The databases for keywords created by the search engines.
Keyword	A word or words used by a searcher on a search engine. In SEO, keywords are the words that a website is optimised to rank for, and in PPC, keywords are bid on by advertisers.
Keyword phrase	More than one keyword can be referred to as a keyword phrase.

Organic search results	The listings on a SERP resulting from the search engine's algorithm. These are not paid for.
Paid search results	The listings on a SERP that are paid for.
Pay Per Click (PPC)	Pay per Click is advertising on search engines where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.
Ranking	In search, ranking is used to describe the relative position of a web page in the SERPs.
Search engine	A tool for searching the Internet. Users of search engines enter keywords relevant to their search, and the search engine returns results from its databases.
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	Search Engine Marketing refers to marketing that is related to search.
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	Search Engine Optimisation is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking in the search engines for specific keywords.
Search Engine Results Page (SERP)	The page that shows the results for a search on a search engine.
Spider	An automated program that scans or crawls web pages to gather information for search engines.
Sponsored links	The paid search results on a SERP.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	The address of a web page on the Internet.

10.3 the importance of search to a marketer

As search engines have become essential to a web user's Internet experience, so search has become essential to a marketer. Search is important for a number of reasons:

1. Search is goal oriented: people use search to find the things they want and need.

The Internet is a highly competitive environment, with literally billions of pages in existence. So how does anyone find the page they're after? Web users find what they need primarily via search. Search drives targeted traffic (and therefore sales) to websites. A web search is a signal of intent from a web user.

2. Search engines are the doorway to the Internet.

According to comScore, 95% of the global Internet population visited a search engine in August 2007.

3. The search industry is BIG.

The daily search volume numbers are in the hundred millions. Research figures indicate that more than 131 billion searches were conducted in December 2009. That's four billion searches per day, 175 million per hour, and 2.9 million per minute (comScore 2010).

4. To be found you must be visible.

If you want your website to generate a significant amount of traffic, it needs to be listed on the major search engines and listed high up enough to be seen. Statistics show that users are not likely to view listings beyond the first 30 results, with the top six (above the fold) listings enjoying the lion's share of clicks (Eyetoools).

5. Top of search equates to top of mind awareness.

Beyond traffic, a high ranking website is valuable for brand perception. Web users often perceive search engine results as an indication of authority. Search visibility promotes brand recognition and research has shown that search engine listings can stimulate brand recall by 220% (Enquiro, 2007).

6. People trust organic search.

Research has shown that over 71% of people have more trust in organic results than paid search results (Prussakov, 2008).

7. Catch potential customers at every phase of the buying cycle.

Most purchases are subject to a buying cycle. At different points in that cycle, prospects are searching with different key phrases. Give them what they want at each phase, and they will keep coming back till they're ready to buy. And they'll be ready to buy more quickly, because information is the best way to shorten the buying cycle.

8. Many people have a search engine as their browser home page.

Often, the home page of a browser is set to a search engine. Many users enter URLs into the search engine instead of the address bar of the browser – meaning that even if they know the URL of a website, they are finding it through search.

10.3.1 A Three Way Relationship: Search Engines, Webmasters and Users

Search engines, Internet users and website owners are involved in a symbiotic three-way relationship. Each party depends on the other two to get what they need.

Users want to find what they are looking for on the Internet.

They use search engines to lead them to websites, and they favour search engines that deliver the most relevant and useful results.

Search engines want to make money from selling advertising.

The more users they have, the more advertising search engines can sell. Therefore, search engines must list their results according to relevance and importance in order to attract and keep users. In turn, search engines favour sites that are relevant and useful to users.

Website owners, webmasters and online marketers want search engines to send traffic to their sites.

Therefore, they need to make sure their sites are relevant and important in both the eyes of the search engines and the users.

Page and Brin sum it up in their pre-Google paper *The Anatomy of a Large-Scale Hypertextual Web Search Engine*:

“The most important measure of a search engine is the quality of its search results.”

10.3.2 What Does a Search Engine Do?

Search engines have four main functions:

- They **crawl the web (via spiders)**.
- They **index the web documents and pages they find**.
- **Search engines process user queries**.
- **Finally, they return ranked results from the index**.

A search engine is made up of a number of parts all working together:

- A **crawling spider**, also known as a web crawler, **robot** or bot, is an automated indexing program. It goes from page to page, following links and indexing or recording what it finds.
- The **index** is what the spider creates. It is a “library” of pages on the Internet and it consists of tens of billions of pages! The search engine creates databases for keywords, so it knows where to go to when a user enters a query.
- The **engine** is the part that does the actual searching. Users input a search query by typing a keyword or phrase into the search bar. The engine then checks its index to find relevant pages and delivers them ordered from most relevant and important to least relevant and unimportant.
- The **SERP** (search engine results page) is the ordered listing of results for the user’s query. A SERP contains a description and link to the result.

10.3.3 Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) has two arms: search engine optimisation (SEO) and pay per click (PPC) advertising. These correspond to the two types of search results.

$$\text{SEO} + \text{PPC} = \text{SEM}$$

SEM search engine marketing	
SEO search engine optimisation	PPC pay per click
PROS	PROS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long term ROI - high volume - more exposure, branding and awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quick low cost setup - highly measurable and trackable - minimal development time required, if at all
CONS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tough to quantify - lots of ongoing work - results can take a while to be seen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be more expensive - CPC is climbing - constant monitoring required

Figure 10.3 The pros and cons of search engine marketing.

SEO aims at improving a website's ranking in the natural search results. PPC advertising involves bidding for placement in the paid search results section of the SERP.

Both SEO and PPC advertising are based around the same fundamental concept: **keywords**.

10.3.4 Keywords – Making Sense of it All

Keywords, or key phrases, are what a user enters into a search engine query to find websites. Both SEO and PPC advertising involve selecting the keywords relevant to a company's website and used by potential customers. SEO aims to have a website rank in the natural results for its target keywords. In PPC advertising, the advertiser bids on desired keywords to achieve rankings in the paid results.

The following two chapters deal with the two arms of search engine marketing: *Search Engine Optimisation* and *Pay Per Click Advertising*.

10.4 universal search

In 2007, Google introduced a radical change to its search engine results pages with the concept of universal search. Also referred to as blended search, universal search results include a variety of media and search verticals in the search results pages. For example, a search result for “Sherlock Holmes” includes images and video amongst the text results.



Figure 10.4 A Google search for “Lionel Messi” returns much more than just a website URL.

Other verticals that are included are news, location or local results, real time results, and even now recipes, among others.

The effect of this change in the layout of search engine results pages has been to draw the user further down the page. Instead of the focus being exclusively on the top two or three web results, eye-catching image thumbnails are encouraging a greater distribution down the search page.

Google, Bing and other search engines continue to innovate to ensure that they are returning relevant, useful results to users.

10.5 summary

Search engine marketing is the industry that has built up around search engines. It consists of both paid and organic search.

To use organic search as an effective search marketing tactic, you must incorporate search engine optimisation (SEO) practices, and aim to improve a websites ranking in the natural search results. This will lead to long term ROI, more exposure and brand awareness.

For effective paid search marketing, create pay per click adverts which are quick to set up, highly measurable, trackable and cost effective.

The effectiveness of both arms of search engine marketing, SEO and PPC, is highly dependent on the use of keywords or key phrases.

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What's inside: Understand how **search engine optimisation** has grown to be **an important marketing tactic**. Gain insight into **the factors that affect the position of your website in search results pages** and how you can go about improving this. Finally explore a **case study** and consider **pros and cons** to help you take steps toward practical application.

11.1 introduction

With millions of people performing millions of searches each day to find content on the Internet, it makes sense that marketers want their products to be found by potential consumers. Search engines use closely guarded algorithms to determine the results displayed. However, determining what factors these algorithms take into account has led to a growing practice known as search engine optimisation.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the practice of optimising a website so as to achieve preferred ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Someone who practices SEO professionally is also known as an SEO (search engine optimiser).

SEO can be split into two distinct camps: white hat SEO and black hat SEO (with, of course, some grey hat-wearers in-between). Black hat SEO refers to trying to game the search engines. These SEOs use dubious means to achieve high rankings, and their websites are occasionally black-listed by the search engines. White hat SEO, on the other hand, refers to working within the parameters set by search engines to optimise a website for better user experience. Search engines want to send users to the website which is most suited to their needs, so white hat SEO should ensure that users can find what they are looking for.

11.2 history

By the mid-90s, webmasters had begun to optimise their sites for search engines due to a growing awareness of the importance of being listed by the various engines. Initially, all a webmaster needed to do was submit the URL of a web page for it to be indexed. Search engines relied on the metadata, information that webmasters inserted in the code of a web page, to determine what a web page was about and to index it appropriately.

Industry analyst Danny Sullivan records that the earliest known use of the term “search engine optimisation” was a spam message posted on Usenet, an online forum or message board, on July 26, 1997.

Realising the importance of being ranked highly in search results, webmasters began using the search engine’s reliance on metadata to manipulate the ranking for their websites. To combat this, search engines in turn have developed more complex algorithms including a number of other ranking factors.

While at Stanford University, Larry Page and Sergey Brin developed a search engine, called Backrub, which relied on a mathematical algorithm to rank web pages. They founded Google in 1998, which relied on PageRank, hyperlink analysis as well as on-page factors to determine the prominence of a web page. This enabled Google to avoid the same kind of manipulation of on-page factors to determine ranking.

Quoted from Google:

'PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

PageRank was based on the practice of academic citations. The more times an academic paper is cited, the more likely it is to be considered an authority paper on the subject. Page and Brin used a similar theory for their search engine – the more times a web page or website is linked to, the more likely it is that the community considers that page an authority.

However, ranking highly in search results is vital to websites, so webmasters have adapted their websites as search engines have updated their algorithms to avoid being "gamed". Today, Google says it uses more than 200 different factors in its algorithm to determine relevance and ranking. None of the major search engines disclose the elements they use to rank pages, but there are many SEO practitioners who spend time analysing patent applications to try to determine what these are.

In 2007, Google released a major change to its search engine results pages. Along with other search engines such as Bing, Google now serves media such as images and video in search results. In addition, realtime results are served for rapidly changing events, while news and social results are also displayed in the search engine results pages. In 2010, both Bing and Google announced that social signals are used in ranking search results.

11.3 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Alt text	This refers to the "alt" attribute for the IMG HTML tag. It is used in HTML to attribute a text field to an image on a web page, normally with a descriptive function, telling a user what an image is about and displaying the text in instance where the image is unable to load.
Anchor text	The visible, clickable text in a link.
Backlink	All the links on other pages that will take the user to a specific web page. Each link to that specific page is known as an inbound/backlink. The number of backlinks influences PageRank so the more backlinks the better - get linking!
Canonical	The canonical version is the definitive version. In SEO, it refers to a definitive URL.
Domain name	The easy to read name used to identify an IP address of a server that distinguishes it from other systems on the World Wide Web: our domain name is quirk.biz.
Flash	A technology used to show video and animation on a website. It can be bandwidth heavy and unfriendly to search engine spiders.
Heading tags	Heading tags (H1, H2, H3 etc) are standard elements used to define headings and subheadings on a web page. The number indicates the importance, so H1 tags are viewed by the spiders as being more important than the H3 tags. Using target key phrases in your H tags is essential for effective SEO.
Home page	The first page of any website. The home page gives users a glimpse into what your site is about – very much like the index in a book, or a magazine.
Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)	HyperText Markup Language, read by web browsers. Certain HTML tags are used to structure the information and features within a web page.
Hyperlink	A link in a document (electronic) that allows you, once you click on it, to follow the link to the relevant web page.
Internet Portal (IP) address	The Internet Protocol (IP) address is an exclusive number, which is used to represent every single computer in a network.
Keyword frequency	The number of times a keyword or key phrase appears on a website.
Keyword phrase	Two or more words that are combined to form a search query - often referred to as keywords. It is usually better to optimise for a phrase rather than a single word.

Keyword rankings	This term refers to where the keywords/phrases targeted by SEO rank amongst the search engines - if your targeted terms do not appear on the first three pages, start worrying.
Landing page	The page a user reaches when clicking on a paid or organic search engine listing. The pages that have the most success are those that match up as closely as possible with the user's search query.
Link	A link is a URL embedded on a web page. If you click on the link you will be taken to that page.
Link bait	A technique for providing content that attracts links from other web pages.
Meta tags	Meta tags are there to tell the spiders what exactly the web pages are about. It's important that your meta tags are optimised for the targeted key phrases. Meta tags are made up of meta titles, descriptions and keywords.
Referrer	When a user clicks on a link from one site to another site the user left is the referrer. Most browsers log the referrer's URL in referrer strings. This information is vital to determining which queries are being used to find specific sites.
Robot.txt	A file written and stored in the root directory of a website that restricts the search engine spiders from indexing certain pages of the website.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	This is a website's address e.g. http://www.gottaquirk.com .
URL rewriting	Presenting search-friendly URLs without question marks, rewriting them on the server to their standard format suitable for use in querying dynamic content.
Usability	Usability is a measure of how easy it is for a user to complete a desired task. Sites with excellent usability fare far better than those that are difficult to use.

11.4 how it works

Search engines need to help users find what they're looking for. To make sure they list the best results first, they look for signals of:

- Relevance
- Importance
- Popularity
- Trust
- Authority

SEO, also called organic or natural optimisation, involves optimising websites to achieve high rankings on the search engines for certain selected key phrases.

This is achieved by making changes to the HTML code, content and structure of a website, making it more accessible for search engines, and by extension, easier to find by users. These are also known as **on page factors**. SEO also involves **off page factors** – these generally build links to the website. Activities to increase links to a website, including social media and WebPR, are considered off page SEO.

SEO is an extremely effective way of generating new business to a site. It is a continuous process and a way of thinking about how search engines see your website and how users use search engines to find your website. It's search psychology.

Search engine optimisation is a fairly technical practice but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

- A search engine friendly website structure
- A well researched list of key phrases
- Content optimised to target those key phrases
- Link popularity
- Usage data

11.4.1 Search Engine Friendly Website Structure

Search engines encounter two kinds of obstacles:

- Technical challenges that prevent the search engine spider from accessing content.
- A competitive marketing environment where everyone wants to rank highly.

To ensure search engines can access your content, you must remove technical barriers. Those who wish to achieve the best results must follow best practices. These best practices are outlined in the chapter on *Web Development and Design*.

The key is to make sure that there are direct, HTML links to each page you want the search engines to index. The most important pages should be accessible directly from the home page of your website.

Thus, the information architecture, or how content is planned and laid out, has important usability and SEO implications. Users want to find what they are looking for quickly and easily, while website owners want search engine spiders to be able to access and index all applicable pages.

There are times when user experience and SEO can be at odds with each other, but usually if you focus on building usable, accessible websites, you have made them search engine friendly as well.

Another technical challenge to search engines is Flash. For the most part, search engines struggle to crawl and index Flash sites. There are some workarounds, but the best approach from an SEO perspective is to avoid building sites or delivering key content in Flash.

The chapter on web development and design delves more deeply into building a search engine friendly website.

11.4.2 Well Researched Key Phrases

Key phrases are the very foundation of search. When a user enters a query on a search engine, she uses the words she thinks are relevant to her search. The search engine then returns those pages it believes are most relevant to the words the searcher used.

Search engines have built a sophisticated understanding of semantics and the way we use language. So, if a user searches for “car rental” the search engine will look for pages that are relevant to “car rental” as well as possibly “car hire”, “vehicle hire” and so forth. Search engines have also built up knowledge around common misspellings and synonyms and common related searches, so as to try to return the best results for a user.

Because of this, it is crucial that websites contain content that implements keywords that are likely to be used by their target audience. Websites need to appear when their potential customers are searching for them.

As a website owner, or the marketer for a website, we need to build a list of some of the terms our potential customers are likely to use to find the things we are offering. A large part of keyword research is understanding search psychology. When we build our key phrase or keyword list, we are tapping into the mental process of searchers and putting together the right mix of keywords to target.

There are four things to consider when choosing a keyword:

- **Search volume**
How many searchers are using that phrase to find what they want? For example, there is an estimated monthly search volume of over 338 billion for the keyword “hotel”, but an estimated 6600 searches per month for a keyword like “Cape Town Waterfront hotel”.

note

Keyword or key phrase?
Key phrases are made up of keywords, but you can get away with referring to a key phrase as keywords.

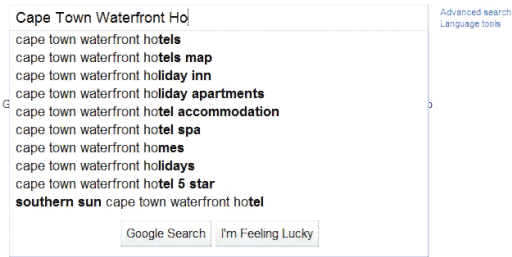


Figure 11.1 As of July 2011, there are 6600 searches per month for the keyword “Cape Town Waterfront hotel”.

- **Competition**

How many other websites out there are targeting that same phrase? For example, Google finds over 2 630 000 000 results for “hotel” but only 37 100 000 for “Cape Town Waterfront Hotel”.

- **Propensity to convert**

What is the likelihood that the searcher using that key phrase is going to convert on your site? A conversion is a desired action taken by the visitor to your website.

Related to propensity to convert is the relevance of the selected term to what you are offering. If you are selling rooms at a hotel at the V&A Waterfront, which of the two terms (“hotel” and “Cape Town Waterfront hotel”) do you think will lead to more conversions?

- **Value per lead**

What is the average value per prospect attracted by the keyword? Depending on the nature of your website, the average value per lead varies. Using the hotel example again, consider these two terms:

“luxury Cape Town hotel” and “budget Cape Town hotel”

Both are terms used by someone looking to book a hotel in Cape Town, but it is likely that someone looking for a luxury hotel is intending to spend more. That means that particular lead has a higher value, particularly if you have a hotel booking website that offers a range of accommodation.

Keyword Research

How do you know where to start on building your keyword list? It requires a little thought, and a fair amount of research using tools which are readily available to help you both grow and refine your list of keywords.

Brainstorm

Think about the words you would use to describe your business, and about the questions or needs of your customers that it fulfils. How would someone ask for what you are offering? Consider synonyms and misspellings as well.

Bear in mind that people might not ask for your services in the same way you describe them. You might sell “herbal infusions” whereas most people would ask for “herbal teas”, although some might request a “tisane”.

If you are selling Tamagotchis, remember that the spelling can be tough to recall, and you might need to consider common misspellings like “tumagochi” or “tamagochi”.

note

Misspellings are important, but when you are selling something, consider what the misspelling tells you about the traffic you are getting. With everything, analyse your traffic to assess for quality.

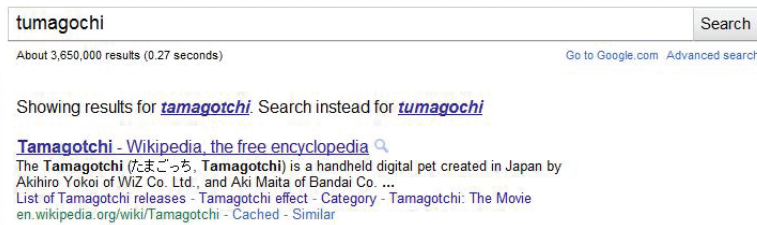


Figure 11.2 People commonly spell certain terms incorrectly.

Survey customers and look at your website referral logs

Look to see what terms customers are already using to find you, and add those to your list. If they are already sending you some traffic, it is worth seeing if you can increase that traffic.

Use keyword research tools

There are several tools available for keyword discovery, and some of them are free! Some tools will scan your website and suggest keywords based on your current content. Most will let you enter keywords, and will then return suggestions based on past research data with:

- Similar keywords.
- Common keywords used with that keyword.
- Common misspellings.
- Frequency of the keywords in search queries.
- Industry related keywords.
- Keywords that are sending traffic to your competitors.
- How many sites are targeting your keywords.

See **Tools of the Trade** for some tools that you can use.

Bearing in mind the factors that make a good keyword, you need to aim for the right mix of keywords. Low volume terms, with low levels of competition may be a good way to get traffic in the short term, but don't be scared off by high-

levels of competition in the high-value, high-volume areas. It might take longer to get there, but once there, the revenue can make it all worthwhile.

It is a good idea to create a spreadsheet of the list of keywords, where you can also store information relevant to that keyword.

Keyword or phrase	Search volume	Competition	Propensity to Convert	Value of Lead
Hotel	3,870	90%	2%	\$18
Luxury hotels	345	80%	35%	\$35

Figure 11.3 *One should maintain a spreadsheet of the factors that will inform the best choice of keywords to target.*

This will help you to choose the right keywords to target. These lists should be created for the whole website, and then can be broken down for each page you want to optimise.

11.4.3 Optimising Content for Key Phrases

Once keywords and phrases are selected, we need to ensure the site contains content to target those key phrases. We must ensure that the content is properly structured and that it sends signals of relevance. Content is the most important part of your website. We must create relevant, targeted content aiming at our selected key phrases.

Content already has several roles to play on your site:

- It provides information to visitors.
- It must engage with them.
- It must convince them to do what you want.

Now it must also send signals of relevance to search engines. You need to use the keywords on the content page in a way that search engines will pick up, and users will understand.

Each web page should be optimised for two to three key phrases: the primary key phrase, the secondary and the tertiary. A page can be optimised for up to five key phrases, but it is better to have more niche pages than fewer unfocused pages.

Here are some guidelines:

1. **Title tag:** use the key phrase in the title and as close to the beginning as possible.
2. **H1 header tag:** use the key phrase in the header tag, and as much as possible in the other H tags.
3. **Body content:** use the key phrase at least three times, more if there is a lot of content and it makes sense to. You should aim for about 350 words of content. But don't overdo it! That could look like spam to the search engines.
4. **Bold:** use tags around the keyword at least once.
5. **URL:** use a URL rewrite so that it appears in the URL of the page.
6. **Meta description:** use it at least once in the meta description of the page. It should entice users to clickthrough to your site from the SERP.
7. **Link anchor text:** try to ensure that the keyword is used in the anchor text of the pages linking to you.
8. **Domain name:** if possible, use the key phrase in your domain name.

Optimising media

Images and video should also be optimised with the relevant keywords. Search engines cannot see images or view videos, so rely on the way that media is described to determine what it is about. Screen readers also read out these descriptions, which can help visually impaired readers to make sense of a website. Lastly, media such as images and video are sometimes also shown on the SERPs. Proper optimisation can give a brand more ownership of the SERP real estate, and can also be used effectively to target competitive terms.

Just as an image or video can help emphasise the content on a page to a visitor to that page, they can also help search engines in ranking pages, provided they are labelled correctly.

Here are some ways to optimise media with key phrases for SEO:

- Use descriptive filenames.
- Use specific ALT tags and Title attributes for images.
- Meta information can be supplied in the image or video file. Make sure this information is relevant.
- Use descriptive captions, and keep relevant copy close to the relevant media.
- Make sure the header tags and images are relevant to each other.
- For video, consider converting the script to text and making this available to search engines. YouTube offers an autocaptioning service that makes this easier to do.


Title: Handmade bags for quirky, one of a kind style	
H1 Header tag: Customised Handmade Bags to Suit Your Style	
	Body Copy: Here, descriptive and compelling copy about how handmade bags will make anyone a style maven, what the benefits are to the community that make the bags, and how distinctive handmade bags will make the owner feel. Text should be written in a logical, easy to follow fashion. You could also highlight the designers of handmade bags, and how their personality shows in their work.
Alt Attribute for Photo: Distinctive Handmade Bags in Many Colours.	
URL: http://www.domain.com/handmade-bags	

Figure 11.4 An example of a page targeting the phrase “handmade bags”.

SEO is both a science and an art. Focusing on writing quality content while sticking to a few guidelines on tags and URLs is the best way to ensure results. Remember, you want search engines to rank you highly for your content, but you also want to ensure the content is a pleasure to read.

Regularly adding fresh content which carries brand values regularly to your site will also encourage the search engines to crawl your site more frequently.

Use your website and its pages to establish and reinforce themes. Information can always be arranged in some kind of hierarchical structure. Just as a single page can have a heading and then get broken down into sub-headings, a large website can have main themes that get broken down into sub-themes. Search engines will see these themes and recognise your website as one with rich content.

11.4.4 Link Popularity

Links are a vital part of how the Internet works. The purpose of a link is to allow a user to go from one web page to another. Search engines, doing their best to mimic the behaviour of humans, also follow links.

Besides allowing search engine spiders to find websites, links are a way of validating relevance and indicating importance. When one page links to another it is as if that page is voting or vouching for the destination page. Generally, the more votes a website receives, the more trusted it becomes, the more important it is deemed, and the better it will rank on search engines.

Links help send signals of trust.

Signals of trust can only come from a third-party source. Few people will trust someone who says, "Don't worry you can trust me" unless someone else, who is already trusted says, "Don't worry, I know him well. You can trust him". It is the same with links and search engines. Trusted sites can transfer trust to unknown sites via links.

Links help to validate relevance.

Text links, by their very nature, contain text (thank you, Captain Obvious). The text that makes up the link can help validate relevance. A link like "Cape Town hotel" sends the message that, "You can trust that the destination site is relevant to the term 'Cape Town hotel'." If the destination web page has already used content to send a signal of relevance, the link simply validates that signal.

What does a link look like?

Here is the HTML code for a link:

```
<a href="http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm">Anchor Text</a>
```

<http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm> is the page that the link leads to. You should make sure that you are linking to a relevant page in your site, and not just to the home page.

Anchor Text is the text that forms the link. This is the text that you want to contain the key phrase that you are targeting.

The link sends a signal that the target URL is important for the subject used in the anchor text.

There is a lot more information that can be included in this anatomy, such as instructions telling the search engine not to follow the link, or instructions to the browser as to whether the link should open in a new window or not.

```
<a href="http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm" rel="nofollow">Anchor Text</a>
```

rel="nofollow" can be included in links when you don't want to vouch for the target URL. Search engines do not count nofollow links for ranking purposes. It was introduced by Google to try to combat comment spam.

discussion

Why might a site want to tell the search engine not to follow a link?

discussion

Why are government and university websites considered to have more authority? What sort of websites would they be more likely to link to?

Not all links are created equal

Of course, not all links are equal. Some sites are more trusted than others. So if they are more trusted, then links from those sites are worth more. Likewise, some sites are more relevant than others to specific terms. The more relevant a site, the more value is transferred by the link. Well known and established news sites, government sites (.gov) and university domains (.ac) are examples of sites from which links can carry more weighting. SEOMoz.org, among others, provides useful tools which help you to determine the value of links from particular sites.



Search algorithms also consider relationships between linked sites. By analysing various things, the engines try to determine if the links are natural links, or if they are manipulative, artificial links created solely for ranking purposes. Manipulated links are worth very little compared to natural links and may lead to a drop in search engine rankings.

The search engine algorithm will also determine the relevancy of the referring website to the site being linked to. The more relevant the sites are to each other, the better.

How does a website get more links?

With links playing such a vital role in search engine rankings and traffic for a website, everyone wants more of them. The more relevant the referring website is to your website, the better the link. There are certainly dubious means to generating links, most of which can actually result in being penalised by the search engines. However, here are some ways that ethical and honest website owners and marketers (and that's what you are) go about increasing links to their websites:

Creating excellent, valuable content that others want to read

If people find your site useful, they are more likely to link to it. It is not necessary, nor possible, to try to write content that will appeal to the whole of the Internet population. Focus on being the best in the industry you are in, and in providing value to the members of that community. Make sure that valuable content is themed around your key phrases.

Infographics are visual and graphic representations of data, and are a popular type of content that is useful to users, and can encourage lots of traffic and inbound links.

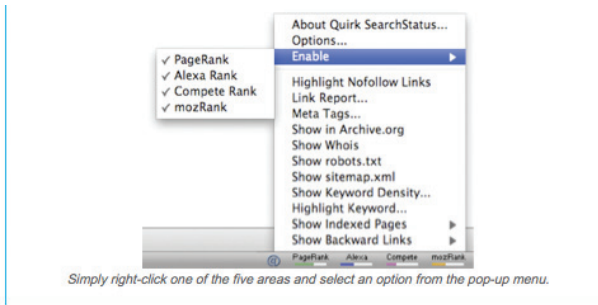


Figure 11.5 Quirk's Mozilla Firefox extension Search Status is free to use.

Create tools and documents that others want to use

Interview experts in your field, and host those interviews on your website. Think outside the box for quirky, relevant items that people will link to. Calculators are popular tools, and we don't just mean the ones that add two and two together. If you have a website selling diet books, for example, create a tool which helps users calculate their BMI and target weight.

Games

Creating a game that people want to play is a great way to generate links. Make sure that the theme of the game is based on the key phrases for your website, so that when others talk about and link to the game, they are using your key phrases!

Software and widgets

Widgets, browser extensions and other software that users love to use all help to generate links for a website. Quirk has released a Mozilla Firefox extension called SearchStatus that is exceptionally useful to the SEO community. Each time someone mentions this SEO tool, they link to Quirk.

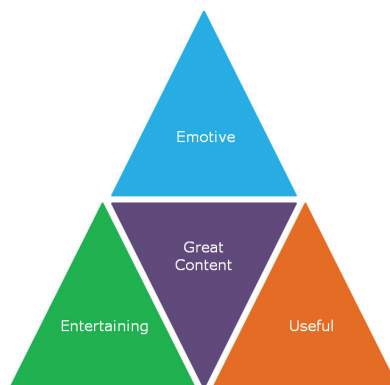


Figure 11.6 One should create content that is either entertaining, useful or emotive.

WebPR

In the chapter *WebPR* you'll learn how taking PR online can provide valuable links to your content. This involves writing content relevant to your industry and then distributing that content.

Competitor analysis

Find out who is linking to your competitors, and which non-competing sites are ranking highly for your key phrases. Use this information to identify sites to target for link requests.

Using Yahoo! search, the following search operators can be used to find these links and websites:

- `Linkdomain:url.com`
- `Link:http://www.url.com/page.html`
- `Linkdomain:url.com word`
- `Linkdomain:url.com -term`
- `Linkdomain:url.com -site:url.com`

With all link building tactics, make sure that you use your key phrases when communicating. You will be telling people how to link to you, and ensuring that search engines notice your authority.

11.4.5 Usage Data

Search engines want their results to be highly relevant to web users, to make sure that web users keep returning to the search engine for future searches. And the best way to establish relevance to users? How they use websites, of course!

Usage data is the most effective way of judging the true relevancy and value of a website. For example, if users arrive on a website and leave immediately, chances are it wasn't relevant to their query in the first place. However, if a user repeatedly visits a website and spends a long time on the site, chances are it is extremely relevant. When it comes to search engines, relevant, valuable sites get promoted, irrelevant sites get demoted.

How do search engines access this data?

Search engines use cookies to maintain a history of a user's search activity. This will include keywords used, and websites visited from the search engine. Search engines gather data on the clickthrough rate of results, and on bounce rates.

Most search engines also provide other services, all of which can be used to gather data relevant to search. For Google, some examples include:

- [Google AdWords](#)
- [Google AdSense](#)
- [Google Checkout](#)

This is still a relatively new area of SEO. It no doubt plays a part in search engine rankings, and that contribution is set to grow.

Site speed, i.e. the performance of your website, is a contributing factor to ranking in Google. Google intimated the importance of site speed in 2009, and confirmed it as one of over 200 ranking signals in April 2010.

So, what does this mean for SEO? When it comes to a website, it must:

- [Be valuable enough to attract both visitors and links naturally.](#)
- [Retain visitors and make sure they return to the website.](#)
- [Convert visitors.](#)

Social and Search

Social information is playing an ever increasing role in search. Social content, such as Twitter messages or YouTube videos, can appear in the SERPs, and there is a growing indication of social influence on search rankings. Google's realtime search returns almost exclusively socially shared results.


There are several social factors to consider when it comes to social and search.

1. Use social media properties to dominate brand SERPs.

When someone searches for your brand name, you can use your social media properties to “own” more of the results on that page. Use your brand name when naming Twitter and Flickr profiles, and Facebook and YouTube pages.

[Videos for bmw](#) - Report videos



[BMW augmented reality](#) 
3 min - 3 Oct 2007
Uploaded by V431
[youtube.com](#)




[BMW](#) 
3 min - 22 Jan 2007
Uploaded by marcinbomba
[youtube.com](#)

Figure 11.7 Video search results for the term “BMW”.

2. Social links are used as signals of relevance.

Links from social sites such as Twitter include “rel=nofollow”. However, there is a strong indication that these links are in fact followed by search engines, and are used to determine relevance. If you focus on creating great content on your site and making sure that it is easy to share socially, you should see a result in your SEO efforts.

note

SEO is also influenced by social signals such as a Facebook Like or Google's +1 (pronounced ‘plus one’).

You can Like a web page, and +1 a result on a search engine results page (SERP) as well as website content. This means giving it the thumbs up as well as sharing it with your network of contacts via your personal profile. This will improve the content's ranking since it is viewed as a form of endorsement, thus reflecting that the link is relevant.

3. Personalised results are influenced by your online social network.

If you are logged in to a social network while searching (Facebook for Bing, or logged in to Google with your Gmail Google Account), you could see results from or influenced by your social circle. In Bing, for instance, results can include indications of what your friends have previously liked or shared via Facebook. On Google, you might be more likely to see your friend's blog for relevant searches.

4. Optimise for social search engines.

While Google is the biggest search engine worldwide, YouTube is the second biggest. Even within social properties, users still use search to find the content they are looking for. Content that is housed on these properties should be optimised for the relevant social search engine as well.

Mobile Search

As web-enabled mobile devices continue to penetrate more of the market, and become easier to use, mobile search remains a key growth area. Mobile searches tend to be different to desktop searches. They are more navigational in nature (users tend to know where they want to end up), and users are looking for concise, actionable answers.

Mobile search input can also be different to desktop search. As well as typing in search keywords, mobile users can search by voice, using images or scanning barcodes.

As with mobile web development, mobile SEO is a little different to desktop SEO, though the fundamental principles remain. Build usable and accessible sites with great content, and you've already come a long way.

Where there are differences in approach for mobile SEO, these are largely due to:

- Search engines having the ability to deliver precise location-based results to mobile users.
- The importance of usability in sites for mobile devices.
- Search engines having less data to work with (as compared to traditional web) in terms of site history, traffic, and inbound links.

The fundamentals of mobile SEO are not so different to those of desktop SEO.

1. A usable, crawlable site is very important.

Build mobile versions of your website that cater for mobile users: simple, easy navigation, and content stripped down to only what is required.

2. Content is important, and should be formatted for mobile usage.

Text and images should be optimised for the mobile experience – so no large file sizes! The metadata still matters: titles and descriptions are what users see in the SERPs.

3. Links are important, though less important at this time.

You should link to your mobile site from your desktop site and vice versa. Submit your mobile site to relevant mobile directories.

4. Submit a mobile XML sitemap.

Mobile specific sitemaps use the same protocols as standard xml sitemaps, with the addition of a mobile tag.

5. Use the word “mobile” on the mobile website, or use mobile TLDs.

Make it explicit to search engines that this is the mobile version of your website, and they are more likely to prioritise it as such.

Local Search

Local search refers to search behaviour and results where location matters. Either results returned are local in nature, or results returned can be map-based.

With blended SERPs, map-based results can be returned together with other types of results, depending on the type of search. As search engines continue to become more sophisticated, location can be inferred and still influence the type of results.

For example, a user might search for “plumber london” and the search will know to return results for London plumbers. These might even be returned on a map. However, a user in London might just search for “plumber”. The search can infer from the user’s IP address that the user is in London, and still return results for London plumbers.

For search engines to return location relevant results, they need to know the location of things being searched for! This is often determined by sites which include the name and address of a business. Note that this site might not be yours. Location results are often determined from various review sites, and the results can include some of those reviews.

Search engines also allow businesses to “claim” their location. A business can verify itself through a process with the search engine, and ensure that location information is correct.

note

You can read more about Mobile SEO in the *Mobile Engagement* chapter.

note

In 2006, Google found that the BMW Germany website `bmw.de` was using a JavaScript URL redirect to send search engine spiders and web visitors to different pages, with different content. It was removed from the Google index until the webmaster had ensured that the website met Google’s guidelines.

What Not to Do

Black hat SEO refers to practices which attempt to game the search engines. Should a search engine uncover a website using unethical practices to achieve search engine rankings, it is likely to remove that website from its index.

Google publishes guidelines for webmasters, available through Google's Webmaster Central (www.google.com/webmasters). As well as outlining best practice principles, Google has supplied the following list of don'ts:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially duplicate content.
- Don't create pages with malicious behaviour, such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other badware.
- Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programmes with little or no original content.
- If your site participates in an affiliate programme, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.
- Avoid link farms and focus on attracting quality, valuable links.

The bottom line: design websites for users first and foremost, and don't try to trick the search engines. It will only be a matter of time before they uncover the black hat techniques.

11.5 tools of the trade

There are a number of tools available to assist with SEO. Some are made available by search engines, and some are developed by agencies and individuals who specialise in SEO. Most are available for free.

Google Webmaster Tools

URL: www.google.com/webmasters

Google provides guidelines to webmasters, and tools to help ensure your website is being indexed.

Quirk SearchStatus

URL: www.quirk.biz/searchstatus

Quirk SearchStatus is a Firefox extension that allows you to easily view key SEO information related to the page you are visiting. As well as linking to Alexa and Compete rankings and a Whois look up, Quirk SearchStatus will highlight

keywords on a page and allow you to easily access link reports from each of the major search engines.

Tools from SEOBook.com

URL: tools.seobook.com

SEOBook.com provides a number of tools that assist any SEO. For example, Rank Checker is a Firefox extension that allows you to save a number of keywords and to perform regular searches on them, giving you the ranking of your chosen URL for each keyword in the search engines selected. They also have tools to help with keyword discovery.

Keyword discovery tools

There are a number of tools available, some free and some paid for, to assist with keyword discovery. Some include:

Trellion's Keyword Discovery Tool -

www.keyworddiscovery.com

Wordtracker -

www.wordtracker.com

Wordtracker Keyword Questions -

<https://freekeywords.wordtracker.com/keyword-questions/>

Microsoft Advertising Intelligence -

<http://advertising.microsoft.com/small-business/adcenter-downloads/microsoft-advertising-intelligence>

Web Seer -

<http://hint.fm/seer/>

SEO PowerSuite Rank Tracker (the trial version only has limited functionality) -

<http://link-assistant.com>

Online forums

Webmaster World (www.webmasterworld.com) is frequented by SEOs and webmasters aiming to stay current with latest trends and search engine updates.

11.6 pros and cons

Optimising a website for search engines should entail optimising the website for users. Done properly, it should result in a better user experience, while ensuring that search engines index and rank the website well.

However, it can be tempting to focus on the technicalities of SEO while forgetting that both robots and humans need to read the same website. One should not be sacrificed for the other.

Search engines update their algorithms regularly. Each update is an attempt to improve search results, but can result in loss of rankings for some websites, depending on the update. A contingency plan, such as a prepared PPC campaign, needs to be in place to cope with a sudden drop in rankings.

As with any digital marketing practice, SEO should not be the only focus of digital marketing efforts. It works best when part of a holistic online marketing strategy.

11.7 summary

The average website receives up to 90% of its traffic from search engines, highlighting the importance of SEO.

There are two types of search results:

- Organic or natural results.
- Paid results.

SEO aims to improve a website's ranking in the organic results.

Search engines use algorithms to rank web pages for signs of:

- Relevance
- Importance
- Popularity
- Trust
- Authority

Search engine optimisation is a fairly technical practice but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

1. A search engine friendly website structure.
2. A well-researched list of key phrases.
3. Content optimised to target those key phrases.
4. Link popularity.
5. Usage data.

Growing trends in SEO include the influence of social content on search results, mobile SEO and local search.

11.8 the bigger picture

Search engine optimisation can be influenced and enhanced by most other digital marketing campaigns, and they should all be approached with this in mind.

For example:

PPC campaigns can provide valuable keyword research which can then be fed into the SEO strategy.

Social media marketing and viral marketing can both generate an enormous amount of links to a website.

WebPR aims to generate links to a website. Make sure that these are optimised for search engines.

11.9 case study: City Lofts

City Lofts (www.citylofts.co.uk) has been online for six years, but their website was suffering from some common problems:

- Lack of visibility in search engines.
- Which led to too little traffic.
- Which meant that the website was not producing a return on investment.

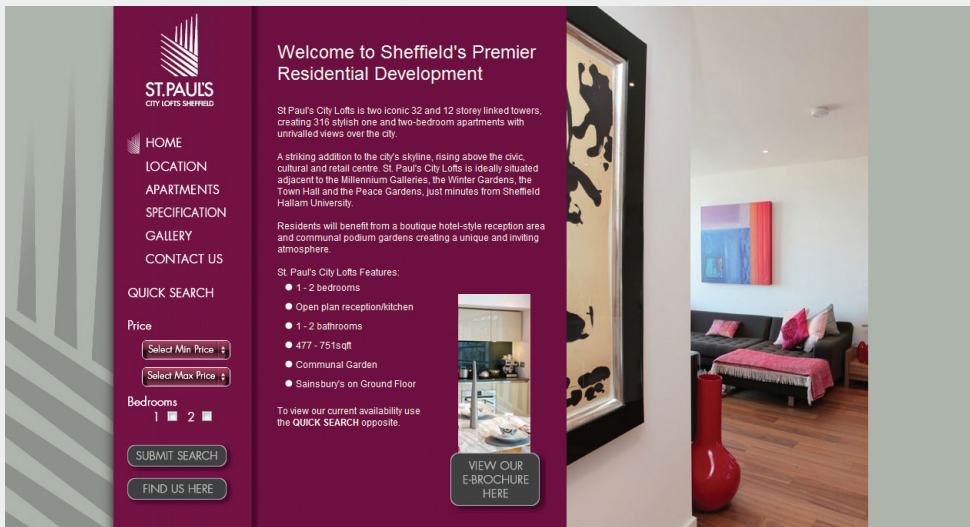


Figure 11.8 SEO was considered in the re-build of the City Lofts website.

Planning a rebuild of their website, City Lofts was made aware of the importance of search and SEO and so the design process was tackled from an SEO perspective. The existing situation was analysed in terms of search engine traffic and barriers to search engines. The design mock-ups for the new website were also analysed by an SEO strategist, to make sure that the new website was built for SEO.

From this, an SEO document with instructions for the web designers and developers was written, so that the new website would be built to be search engine friendly. Some of the ways this was achieved were:

- Implementation of a robots.txt file.
- Setting up 301 redirects of the URLs from the old website to the content on the new website.
- Creating an XML sitemap for submission to search engines.
- Improving naming conventions so that URLs are static and well named.
- Using HTML tags that put emphasis on target keywords.

Before the new website was launched, keyword research found targeted keywords for which to optimise the new website. The website copy was then tweaked by an experienced SEO copywriter, and they were implemented in the metadata and HTML tags. Keyword rich anchor text was used for internal links. Along with this, a rigorous linking strategy was undertaken to build links to the new website.

For the first three months after the website was launched, the copy of further web pages was tweaked to target relevant keywords. Ongoing research revealed new keywords to target, and new content and web pages were created to target them. The link building strategy continued to investigate new link building tactics for City Lofts.

While initial SEO is usually regarded as a six month project, positive results were seen within three months. This was possibly due to the domain's age and accumulated trust. Digital marketing efforts were restricted to SEO, which means that the positive effects of SEO can be measured in isolation.

In summary, the SEO campaign yielded the following results:

- After three months, total traffic from the three major search engines was increased by 65.68%.
- Total website referrals increased by 172.2% over the period.
- Direct traffic to the site increased by 122.4%.
- The number of visitors and repeat visitors showed an increase over the period.

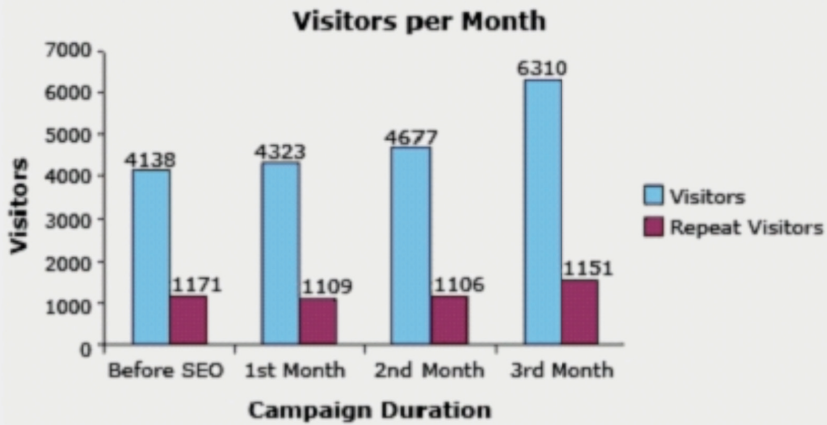


Figure 11.9 There was an overall traffic increase after the City Lofts site re-build.

The considerable overall traffic increase can be attributed to the knock-on effect that SEO has for online brand awareness.

case study questions

1. Why do you need to use 301 redirects when launching a new website?
2. Why were new web pages needed to target new content?
3. Why could SEO increase website referrals and direct traffic?

chapter questions

1. Why do links send signals of trust to search engines?
2. Why is it better to have more niche pages of content than fewer pages that cover a lot of content?
3. How can analysing the links to a competitor's website help aid your own link building strategy?
4. Why is it important for search engines to keep updating their algorithms?
5. If metadata are no longer used for ranking purposes, why do they still have an important role in SEO?

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further reading

- www.seomoz.org – SEOMoz.org provides regular articles, guides and blog posts covering all things SEO. As well as sharing insights from their own SEO efforts, there are also vibrant forums where you can learn from others.
- www.seobook.com – Aaron Wall's SEOBook.com provides training and tools for SEO, as well as regular articles and posts.
- www.gottaquirk.com – the blog from the minds of Quirk, who live, eat and breathe all things Internet.
- www.webmasterworld.com – a forum for webmasters, from beginners to those who've been around. A great resource for a budding SEO.

What's inside: An **introduction** to pay per click advertising is followed by a look at the different types; search content and social network. Learn about the ideal use of text, images and keywords across these PPC types and how to **properly target the people you are intending to reach**. A **practical guide** will get you started on managing your own PPC campaigns and utilising demographic and behavioural targeting as well as **tracking** on your campaigns.

12.1 introduction

Pay per click (PPC) advertising is an advertising system where the advertiser only pays for each click on their advert. Hence, pay per click.

While the term is most often used to refer to the advertising system offered by search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo!, PPC adverts are also run on content sites and social networks.

PPC advertising continues to evolve, and formats available range from simple text adverts through to Flash banners and even video adverts. PPC advertising revolutionised the online advertising industry, and today, PPC advertising generates 99% of Google’s revenue. Google reported revenues of \$8.44 billion for the quarter ended December 31, 2010, an increase of 26% compared to the fourth quarter of 2009. PPC is big business!

In this chapter, we’ll focus on PPC advertising on search engines and social networks.

PPC adverts on search engines are easy to spot – they’re the results listed as “sponsored links”. They can appear on the top of the results page, usually in a box, and also on the right hand side of the results page.

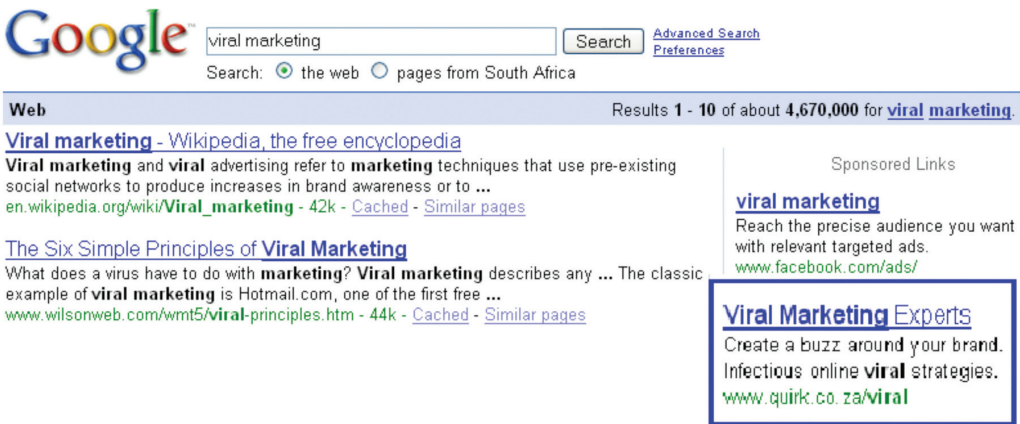


Figure 12.1 PPC adverts appearing in a search for viral marketing.

PPC advertising on search engines is keyword based – this means that it is based on the search term that a user enters into a search engine. A search term can have one word, or be made up of many words. Sometimes a multi-word search term is referred to as a “key phrase” or “keyword phrase”. Advertisers target those keywords for which they want to appear.

PPC adverts on social networks such as Facebook are also easy to spot. They're generally listed on the right hand side of the page.

PPC advertising on Facebook is interest and demographics based – this means that it is based on the interests that a user enters onto their profiles, or are listed on pages that contain content that is related to interests. Advertisers target those interests for which they want their adverts to appear.

For the advertiser, the beauty of PPC advertising on search engines is that their adverts are displayed when potential customers are already expressing intent – they are searching for a product or service. It allows advertisers to present their offering to a potential customer who is already in the buying cycle.

12.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
adCenter	Microsoft's advertising Platform. Serves PPC adverts to Bing and Yahoo!
AdWords	Google's PPC advertising system.
Ad Space Units (ASUs)	Facebook ad space units, a type of advertising available on Facebook.
Clickthrough	A click on a link that leads to another website.
Conversion rate	Conversions / Clicks %
Cost per action (CPA)	Paid when a certain action is performed by a user.
Cost per click (CPC)	Paid when a link is clicked upon.
Cost per Mil (1000) (CPM)	Amount paid for every 1000 views of an advertisement.
Clickthrough rate (CTR)	Click Through Rate: Clicks / Impressions %
Display network	Content websites that serve PPC adverts from the same provider, such as AdWords.
Impression	Each time the advert is shown.
Key phrase	Just like keyword, this is simply a multi-word keyword.
Keyword	This is a word found within a search query. For example, searching for "blue widgets" includes the keywords blue and widgets.
Natural results	Search results as determined by the search engine's algorithm. The search engine does not get paid to list these.

Pay per click (PPC)	The advertiser only pays for each click of the advert.
Quality score (QS)	A measure used by Google AdWords to indicate how relevant a keyword is to an ad text and to a user's search query.
ROI	Short for return on investment.
Search network	Search engines which all serve adverts from the same provider, such as AdWords.
Search term	The keywords a user enters on a search engine.
Search Engine Results Page (SERP)	SERPs are the actual results returned to the user based on their search query.
Social network	Websites that are social networks, such as Facebook, YouTube or LinkedIn.
Sponsored results	Search engine results that are paid for by the advertiser.
Traffic	This refers to the visitors that visit a website.
YouTube	Video platform that allows text, banner and other video advertising through AdWords.

12.3 history

Search engines display results to search queries based on proprietary algorithms. Each major search engine uses its own formula to determine what results to display for any term. All of this is available to web users for free! With about 80% of web users using search engines as a starting point, that's a lot of traffic going through search engines each day (Jansen and Molino, 2006). So, search engines require a way of generating revenue from all that traffic.

In 1996, the Open Text Index search engine began allowing websites to pay for a preferred ranking in selected results pages, to a mixed response from business owners and other search engines. However, this was pay for placement, not that different from paid inclusion, where advertisers were paying to appear in the search results, whether or not a user clicked through to their site.

In February 1998, GoTo.com launched. This was a new search engine that allowed website owners to bid for placement in the search results pages for specific search terms. Results were ranked according to how much the website owners were willing to bid, with the highest bid appearing at the top of the page. The website owner would only pay for each click, as opposed to for appearing on the results page. By July 1998, advertisers were paying up to a dollar for each click! GoTo.com changed its name to Overture Services Inc in 2001, and was acquired by Yahoo! in 2003. GoTo.com partnered with portals Yahoo! and MSN to monetise their search queries.

Overture successfully patented their PPC mechanism for search engines (“System and method for influencing a position on a search result list generated by a computer network search engine” was patented in 2001), and has since then pursued, successfully, lawsuits against other PPC providers, including Google. Overture initiated infringement proceedings under this patent in 2002, and settled with Google after it had been acquired by Yahoo!. Google agreed to issue 2.7 million shares of common stock to Yahoo! in exchange for a perpetual license.

Google started search engine advertising in December 1999 and launched AdWords in October 2000. AdWords allowed advertisers to place keyword targeted listings, but charged advertisers on a cost per mil (CPM) basis. Google launched PPC advertising in February 2002. In April 2009, Microsoft and Yahoo! announced a 10 year deal which would see Yahoo! using Microsoft’s search results and search advertising technology. As of 2010, all advertising on Yahoo! and Bing is transitioning to the Microsoft adCenter platform.


Facebook launched Facebook Ads on November 6 2007, and eMarketer forecasts that marketers will spend \$4 billion in advertising worldwide on Facebook in 2011. There are some reports that 60% of Facebook’s advertising revenue come from the self service adverts that are on the righthand side of the page (known as ASUs). These adverts are sold on either a CPM or CPC basis.

YouTube InVideo adverts also launched in November 2007, with Pre-Roll Ads and Promoted Videos launching a year later in November 2008. Today there are eleven advertising formats on YouTube, including mobile. Many of these are sold on a pay per click or pay per view basis. You will find more info on this in the chapter *Video Search Engine Optimisation*.

Advertising

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Broadcast Your Campaign

Whether an AdAge 100 advertiser or a local retailer, everyone can broadcast their ad campaign on YouTube and tap into the world's largest online video community.

Learn the basics to advertising on YouTube.

Figure 12.2 YouTube Advertising.

12.4 how it works

PPC advertising is used for a number of channels and platforms. Quite simply, the advertiser pays when a user clicks on an advert. On the display network CPM is also an option. However, there is a lot more that goes into the process. PPC advertising is usually run as an auction model, so advertisers place bids to appear based on certain criteria. The advertising platform determines when adverts are eligible to appear and serves them as appropriate. The advertiser then pays the advertising platform when their advert is clicked on.

With PPC advertising, the advertiser:

- **Creates the copy for an advertisement.**
- **Determines the landing page for the advert.**
- **Selects the keywords or criteria for which that advertisement should appear.**
- **Chooses the maximum amount they are willing to pay for a click on the advert or per 1000 impressions (CPM).**

The advertising platform:

- **Checks the advert for compliance to editorial guidelines.**
- **Displays the advert for relevant search queries or other criteria.**
- **Determines the rank of the advert based on the advertiser's maximum bid and the relevance of the advert (which includes factors such as clickthrough rate (CTR), and ad copy, keyword and landing page relevance).**

For ease, we classify PPC advertising according to the type of environment the advert appears in.

1. Search PPC advertising: this is where the majority of PPC advertising spend is today, and is what most people think of as PPC advertising. This refers to the adverts that appear on search engine results pages. These are mostly text only adverts, but more formats are becoming available. Platforms for running these adverts include Google AdWords and Microsoft's adCenter. Targeting is based on the search term used.

2. Display advertising: this is a strong growth area for PPC advertising. Adverts appear on content pages, such as news sites. These can be text ads or banner adverts. Platforms for managing these adverts include Google AdWords and AdDynamo. Targeting is contextual, based on the content of the page, or behavioural, based on the behaviour of the user to whom the advert is served.

3. Social network advertising: this is also an important growth area for PPC advertising. Adverts are shown to users of social networks. Social networks include Facebook, YouTube (via Google's AdWords) and LinkedIn. It often complements other advertising solutions offered by the social network. Targeting is often behavioural, based on user interests, or demographics, but can be keyword or content based as well (especially for YouTube advertising).

PPC advertising type	Where adverts are displayed	Types of adverts	Example networks	Targeting
Search	Search engine results pages	Text adverts, ad extensions, some images	Google AdWords, Microsoft AdCenter	Keywords
Display	Content sites, e.g. news sites or blogs	Text adverts, banner adverts including rich media, video adverts	Google AdWords, AdDynamo	Keywords and content, behavioural, topics, categories, demographic
Social Network	Social networks e.g. Facebook or YouTube	Text adverts with a standard image, some banner adverts, video adverts	Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn	Behavioural, demographic, keywords
Mobile Network	Search Engine Display Sites	Text and banners	AdWords	Keywords and content, behavioural, topics, categories, demographic

Figure 12.3 Environments PPC adverts can appear in.

Whatever the environment, there are some basic principles which apply across the board. In order to run campaigns effectively, you need to understand the underlying auction model. In order to bid effectively, you need to understand how to calculate ROI for PPC advertising, which means that you need a firm grasp of how to track and measure campaigns.

The other side of effective PPC advertising comes down to the advert being shown. Being able to write effective ad copy and select compelling images is vital for PPC advertising.

Lastly, you need to know how to target campaigns effectively for best results.

Having a firm grasp of PPC advertising on search engines will provide a good foundation for running campaigns across the other networks that are available.

12.5 types of adverts

12.5.1 Text (Search, Display and some Social Networks)

Text only adverts are usually used on search engines, but can also be used on display networks and for advertising on YouTube.

Text adverts all follow a similar format:

[Heading](#)

Two lines of advert copy,
Which can be displayed on one line

[www.DisplayURL.com](#)

(Destination URL)

The URL shown is not necessarily the URL that the user will click through to. When writing the copy, these are known as the display URL (what is shown on the advert) and the destination URL (what the actual URL of the page is). The display URL is sometimes also called a vanity URL. The aim should be to send users to a web page as specific to their search, and the PPC advert, as possible. This is known as deeplinking.

The display URL must be the same domain as the destination URL. Google will only show one advert per display URL.

So, an advert might look like this:

[Roses for Valentine's](#)

A dozen red roses for your love;
Fast, free delivery in RSA.

[www.flowers.co.za](#)

The search engines limit the characters in each line. There are also restrictions on what you are allowed to write in an advert. Here are some of the editorial guidelines from Google AdWords:

- Heading: maximum 25 characters
- Line 1: maximum 35 characters
- Line 2: maximum 35 characters
- Display URL: maximum 35 characters
- No repeated exclamation marks
- No word may be written in capitals only
- No nonsense words may be used
- No claims of "best", "number one" or superlatives may be used unless they can be verified by a reliable third party source
- Product numbers may be used

Writing effective copy

For most PPC adverts, it is only the advert copy that is available to attract attention, convey a message and entice action. There is usually no image to supplement the text. This is why writing effective advert copy is such an important skill for PPC advertising.

discussion

What is the function of the display URL? Do you think that this is misleading to a searcher? Why do you think the display and the destination URL are different?

Dynamic keyword insertion (inserting the search keyword dynamically into the advert copy that appears) or using the keyword in the advert copy can help. This is because the search will mark words that match the search term in bold – making the advert stand out a little bit more.

Use compelling and well crafted Calls to Action so that users know what to do and what to expect: try now, sign up now, buy now.

Many advertisers trial putting an offer in the advert copy, such as a discount or voucher offer. Product or service benefits make for good advert copy, such as free shipping, secure shopping or fast delivery.

Advert Extensions

Google in particular is often experimenting with ways to add additional value or information to PPC adverts. These are referred to as Ad Extensions. For a PPC advertiser, the Ad Extensions offer a way to get additional information displayed with a PPC advert without affecting standard advert copy limits. Ad Extensions are over and above the standard character limits.

Currently, Google offers five text Ad Extensions:

1. Location Extensions

Location extensions are for local adverts, and allow you to add location information and images to your advert. To use the extensions, your AdWords account and Local Business (www.google.com/local) account need to be linked.

2. Ad Sitelinks

Ad Sitelinks allow you to display up to four links, each with a unique destination URL, with your advert. Link text is limited to 35 characters. Ad Sitelinks allow you to direct users to more relevant areas of your website, all from one advert. These four links are in addition to the display URL. They are more suitable to advertising on more general keywords.



The image shows a search advertisement for 'figleaves.com'. The main headline is 'Official figleaves Site' with a small 'Ad' label in the top right corner. Below the headline is the text 'Sexy lingerie to everyday basics, with fast delivery & free returns!' followed by the website name 'figleaves.com'. At the bottom, there are two sitelink extensions: 'Women's Holiday Shop Bridal Lingerie' and '20% Off Elle Macpherson figleaves Outlet'.

Figure 12.4 A example of an advert with sitelinks extensions.

3. Phone Extensions

The phone extension allows you to display a local phone number in a line below the standard text advert.

4. Product Extensions

By linking your AdWords account to your Google Merchant Center account and supplying a product feed, you are able to include product images in your PPC adverts when available. This is particularly useful for eCommerce advertisers.

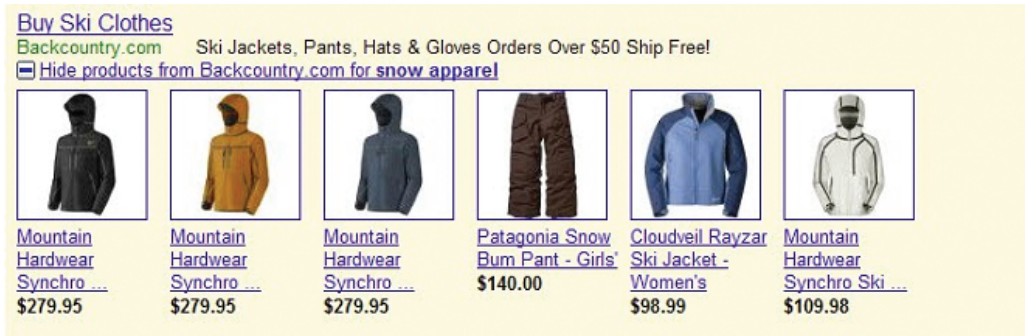


Figure 12.5 Advert with product images included.

5. Seller Ratings Extensions

Google will try to match the domain used in the advert to review sites to display rating information together with your text ad. This is very useful if you have excellent ratings!

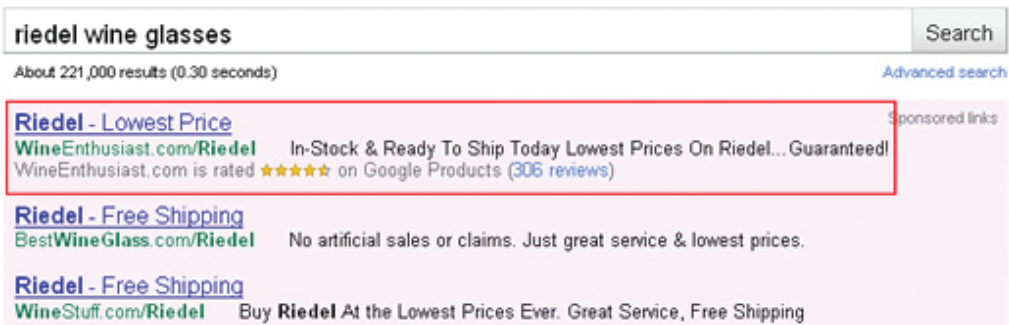


Figure 12.6 An example of a seller rating extension.

12.5.2 Text and Image (Facebook ASUs)

Facebook PPC adverts can be used to drive traffic to assets on Facebook (a page, event, application or group), or can be used to drive traffic to an external website.

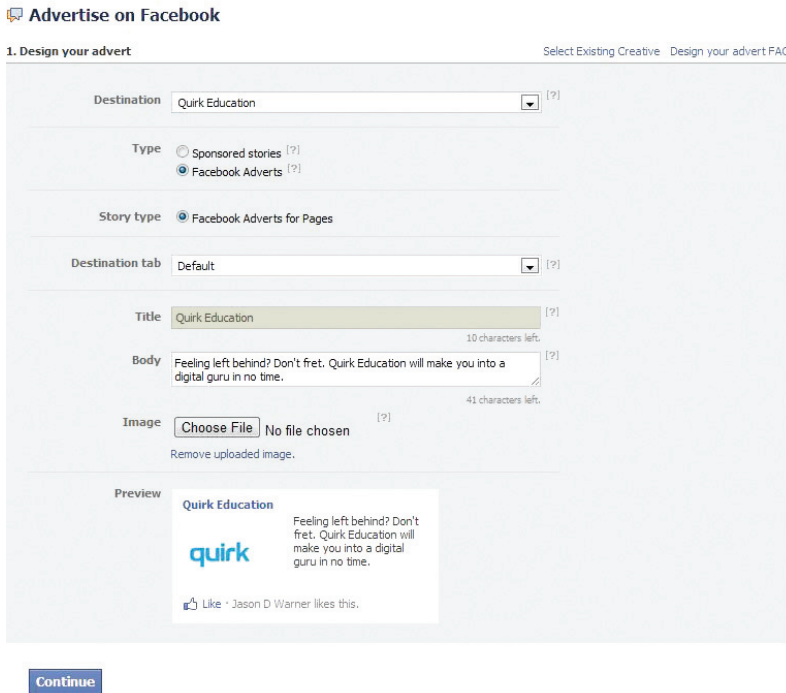


Figure 12.7 An example of the Facebook advertising set-up page.

A Facebook advert is made of:

- Title (25 character maximum), which is linked to the destination URL (or Facebook destination)
- Image (110 x 80 pixels)
- Body text (135 character maximum)
- Social context, which enables advert viewers to see whom of their friends have interacted with this advert

12.5.3 Banner adverts (Display and Social Networks)

Through many advertising platforms, banner advertising can be run on a PPC basis. Most IAB standard banner sizes are available. Google AdWords offers a Rich Media banner advert builder.

Adverts range from simple gif banners, through to Rich Media banners with multiple destination URLs and video banners.

Banner sizes available on the Google Display Network include (all sizes are in pixels):

- Mobile leaderboard (300 x 50)
- Leaderboard (728 x 90)
- Banner (468 x 60)
- Small Square (200 x 200)
- Skyscraper (120 x 600)
- Wide Skyscraper (160 x 600)
- Square (250 x 250)
- Medium Rectangle (300 x 250)
- Large Rectangle (336 x 280)

Banners may be animated, static or Flash, but must be under 50k in file size.



Figure 12.8 A static Wikipedia banner advert.

Bear in mind that the advertising network often includes a small graphic overlay on the bottom of the advert, and does not resize your advert to accommodate this. To avoid this obscuring your advert, you can leave a few pixels of blank space on the bottom of your advert.

All adverts need to be supplied with a destination URL. Some Rich Media adverts allow for multiple destination URLs.

12.6 targeting adverts

PPC adverts are targeted in a variety of ways, from keyword targeting on search engines, to behavioural and demographic targeting on social networks.

12.6.1 Keywords and Match Types

We'll take a look at keyword selection when we go through the process of setting up a campaign, but first you need to know a little bit more about the different ways we can define keywords in a PPC campaign.

Each search engine requires the advertiser to enter the keywords for which their advert should appear. This list of keywords determines the search queries for which the adverts could appear.

On www.google.com in the USA there were almost 200 million searches performed each day (comScore), and Google estimates that nearly 50% of all searches are unique (Hursh, 2006). It would be a tough, if not impossible, task to determine all the possible terms potential customers might use to find you. That is why there are different keyword match types for PPC advertising.

Google AdWords using the following match types:

- **Broad**
- **Phrase**
- **Exact**
- **Negative**

Broad match means that your advert will appear for the keywords you have entered, as well as search terms which contain your keywords and any other words in any order, as well as some variations of your keywords (misspellings and synonyms).

Say you have chosen the following keywords, and this is set to broad match:

tennis shoes

Your advert could appear for all of the following searches:

tennis shoes
red tennis shoes
tennis sneaker
history of tennis shoes

Phrase match, which is denoted with quotation marks around the keywords ("phrase match") means that your advert will appear only for search terms which have your keywords in them, in the same order, though other words may also be in the search term.

If you changed the same keywords to phrase match, they would look like:

"tennis shoes"

Your advert would appear for:

tennis shoes
tennis shoes red

But your advert would not appear for:

smart shoes red

The **broad match modifier** is an additional targeting option that gives you tighter control than broad match, but wider reach than phrase match. It's implemented with a + before the keyword, e.g. red +sneakers.

Using a broad match modifier means that a variation of the marked keyword must appear in the search query. Using

red +sneakers

Your advert could appear for:

red sneakers

red trainers

Your advert should not appear for:

red stilletoes

Exact match, denoted by square brackets ([exact match]), means that the advert will only appear for search terms exactly the same as the keywords selected.

Now change the keyword to exact match:

[tennis shoes]

Your advert will appear for searches for:

tennis shoes

It would not appear for any other searches.

Negative match, denoted by using a dash in front of the keywords (-negative), means that your advert will not appear in searches using that word, no matter what other words are used.

Use the broad match example, and include a negative match:

red shoes

-tennis

Your advert would appear for:

red shoes

smart shoes red

Your advert would not appear for:

red tennis shoes

	Keyword		
search term	red shoes	"red shoes"	[red shoes]
red shoes	✓	✓	✓
buy red shoes	✓	✓	x
red tennis shoes	✓	✓	x
smart shoes red	✓	x	x

Figure 12.9 A table illustrating the results of specifying match types for keywords.

Advertisers can assign as many keywords as they wish to an advert, but only one advert for each URL will be shown. If two advertisers are bidding to show adverts for the same domain, only one will be shown. Which advert will be shown is based on the bids being placed and on the quality of the adverts.

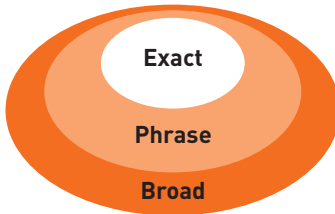


Figure 12.10 Three keyword match types used in PPC.

12.6.2 Language and Location Targeting

You are able to target your adverts, so you know that the traffic you are getting is relevant to your product. This is known as geo-targeting.

You can choose the language of the search engine, and the location. For example, you might only want your advert to show to English searches in Asia, or to English searches in Johannesburg. Targeting your advert means that you won't pay for traffic you don't want.

12.7 behavioural and demographic targeting

PPC advertising can also be targeted based on personal behaviour. With Facebook advertising, adverts can be targeted based on people's profile settings and Facebook behaviour.

You could target your advert based on some or all of the following:

- Gender
- Location
- Relationship status
- Age group

You could also target your behaviour based on:

- Likes and interests
- Brand interactions

Using the Google Display Network and AdWords, you can re-target visitors who came to your site via an AdWords advert based on actions that they took. This means that if someone came to your site, but did not complete a purchase, you can target adverts to them via the Google Display Network.

12.7.1 Bidding and Ranking

Advertisers need to determine the maximum they are willing to pay for a click on their advert, and they need to decide this for each keyword they enter for an advert. This bid is the maximum CPC, or Max CPC, that the advertiser is willing to pay for the click.

note

A Vickrey auction is an auction where bidders do not know what bids others have placed. It is a sealed auction. The Vickrey-Clarke-Groves mechanism is the generalisation of the Vickrey auction that holds that bidders will bid truthfully. In PPC advertising, this is not always the case. Bidders sometimes bid to push prices for their competition instead of to maximise their own revenue.

However, this will not necessarily be the CPC that the advertiser must pay for a click. Every time a search query is entered, the search engine runs an auction to determine the placement of the adverts where advertisers have bid on that search term. This auction is known as a Generalised Second Price (GSP) auction, which is a variation on the Vickrey auction.

In the GSP auction, each advertiser will pay the bid of the advertiser below him, plus a standard increment (typically \$0.01), for a click on their advert.

Say three advertisers, A1, A2 and A3, bid \$2.50, \$3.00 and \$2.35 respectively on the same keyword. The search engine has set a minimum price of \$2.05 on that same keyword. Here is how the adverts would be positioned, and what they would each pay for a click:

Advertiser	Bid price	CPC
A2	\$3.00	\$2.51
A1	\$2.50	\$2.36
A3	\$2.35	\$2.06

Figure 12.11 Three advertisers bidding on the same keyword.

When it comes to ranking, of course, it's not quite as simplistic as that (it rarely is!). As well as the bid an advertiser places on a keyword, the search engine will take a number of other factors into account. In the case of Google AdWords, this is known as Quality Score (QS). Quality Score is applied on a keyword, adgroup and account level. It is important that your entire account has a good Quality Score, as it affects ranking and cost per click.

The Quality Score is determined by, among other factors:

- The relevance of the keyword to the search term.
- The relevance of the advert copy to the search term.
- The relevance of the landing page to the search term.
- The historic CTR of that advert.

Quality score is ranked as follows:

- **Great (8, 9, 10):** Keyword is very relevant and QS needs no improvement.
- **OK (5, 6, 7):** Keyword is relevant, but can still benefit from a higher QS.
- **Poor (1, 2, 3, 4):** This keyword isn't very relevant and QS needs improvement.

12.7.2 Conversion Rates and Clickthrough Rates

Search engines look at factors such as relevancy to try to ensure that it is not just having deep pockets that can land advertisers the top spot. Search engines need to ensure that users find the adverts relevant, otherwise they'll be less likely to click on them – and no click means no revenue for the search engine.

Studies repeatedly show that those adverts nearer the top of the page (so the best ranked) attract the highest clickthrough rates (CTRs). They get the most clicks. And, the clicks cost the advertisers more.

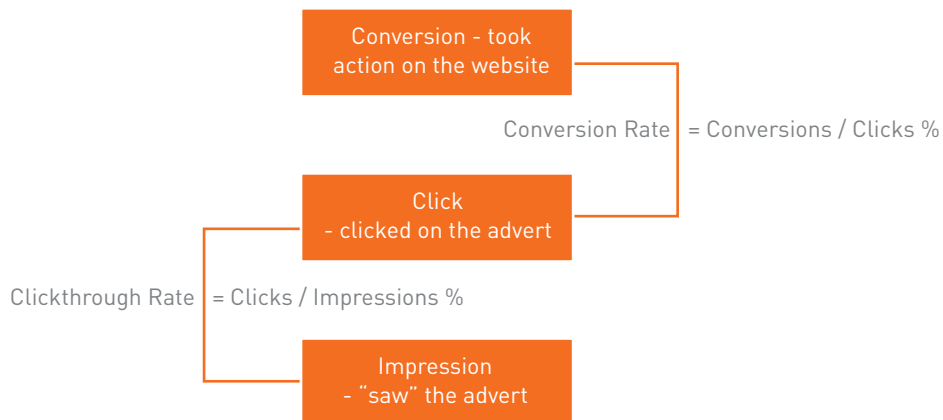


Figure 12.12 An image illustrating clickthrough rate and conversion rate.

You might think, the more clicks the better, but is this necessarily the case? Being in the top position means you will pay more per click. Many clicks at a higher price may use up your budget quickly. In addition, many people click on the top advert believing it to be the top organic search result – often without reading the advert text.

Advertisers need to consider what a user does after clicking through to the advertiser’s website from the search engine. When planning a PPC campaign, it is therefore crucial to set up the goals of the campaign, and make sure that these are being met. With a goal set up, the advertiser can track how many of the users that clickthrough to the website follow through to that goal. This is called a conversion.

Goals can be:

- **Buying a product**
- **Filling in a form**
- **Downloading a whitepaper**
- **Sending an enquiry**
- **Booking a flight**

We know that the CTR of an advert is clicks / impressions.

The conversion rate of an advert is conversions / clicks.

The cost per action (or the cost per each conversion) is the total cost of the campaign, divided by the number of conversions.

The average cost per click is the total cost of the campaign divided by the number of clicks.

As the advertiser, you also need to know the value of each conversion. You need to know this so that you don’t pay too much for your clicks, and so that you bid to have the best CTR for maximum ROI.

	Impressions	Clicks	CPC	Total Cost	CTR	Conversions	Conversion Rate	CPA
A	1134	55	\$ 0.89	\$ 48.95	5%	5	9%	\$ 9.79
B	1134	123	\$ 1.36	\$167.28	11%	11	9%	\$ 15.21
C	2256	225	\$ 0.89	\$ 200.25	10%	11	5%	\$ 18.20

Figure 12.13 *The above table shows how you might adjust bidding strategies based on business principles.*

- **Example A:** Bid on a keyword with phrase match.
- **Example B:** Bid on the same keyword with phrase match, but bid for a higher position. The conversion rate of the website remains the same, but because of the higher CPC, the CPA increases, although there are more conversions.
- **Example C:** Bid on the same keyword, but with broad match this time. Because the traffic is less targeted, the conversion rate on the website is lower. This means that the CPA increases again.

The campaign needs to be run according to business rules. A PPC campaign can aim for maximum conversions, but this is usually at a higher CPA.

12.7.3 Tracking

In order to be able to report on campaigns all the way through to conversion, you need to use appropriate conversion tracking. Conversion tracking is usually accomplished with a small tracking pixel that is on the conversion confirmation page of the website.

Google AdWords offers conversion tracking tags, which will allow you to report on AdWords campaigns from impression through to conversion.

In order to track many other networks, however, third party tracking needs to be used. Most advert serving technology will also enable pay per click tracking (usually at a nominal additional cost per click). If you are running display campaigns through these networks as well, this has the benefit of reporting on how the campaigns might influence each other.

If you are sending traffic to a website that uses Google Analytics, you can use campaign tracking to track and report on campaigns that are driving traffic to the site.

Budgets

In Google AdWords, as well as deciding on your CPC bids for your keywords, you are able to determine the budgets for your campaign. You can set daily budgets, monthly budgets or no budget. Once your budget is reached, your adverts no longer run, so you can be sure that you never overspend. If you are concerned about overspending, you can set a daily budget. However, this can mean that your adverts do not run as often as you would wish them to.

The different advertising platforms offer advanced bidding options, all aimed at helping you to run your advertising campaign better. You can bid for placement on the SERP, or you can bid based on how much you are willing to pay per click. You are able to bid for adverts during certain times of the day only.

Which platform should I choose?

There is some theory that different platforms are better for different industries, for example, that Yahoo! fares better than Google on travel advertising. However, this is subjective, and most large advertisers will run PPC campaigns on a number of platforms. As with most things in digital marketing, it is all about testing.

There are some small differences with each platform in terms of editorial policy, and each system has a different user interface. Google AdWords is perhaps the most well-known; allowing users to transact in the currency of their choice, as well as also offering training programmes and certifications. Google AdWords also currently has the best geo-targeting worldwide, although geo-targeting is offered by Microsoft's adCenter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube.

The long tail

Google has estimated that 50% of searches are unique. This means that the sum of searches which are unique is about the same as the sum of non-unique searches. Looking a little more closely at search terms will show a small number of high volume searches, and then a large number of lower volume searches stretching out to those unique searches.

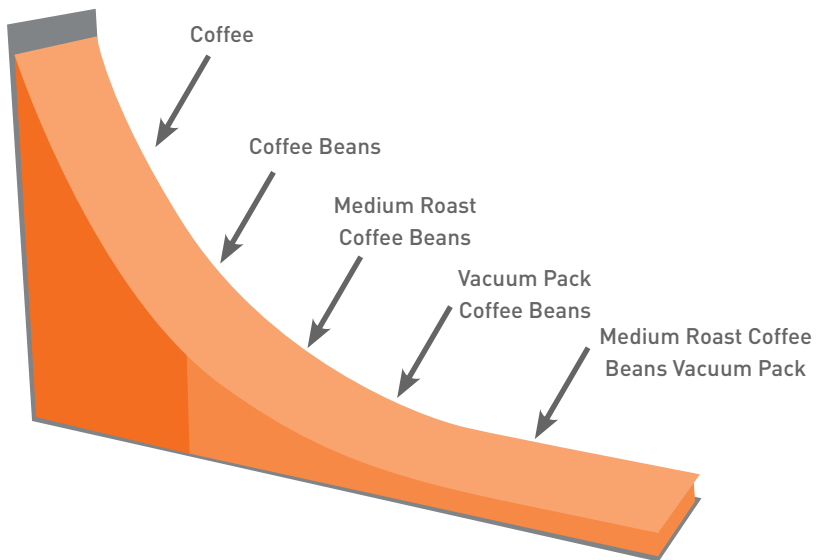
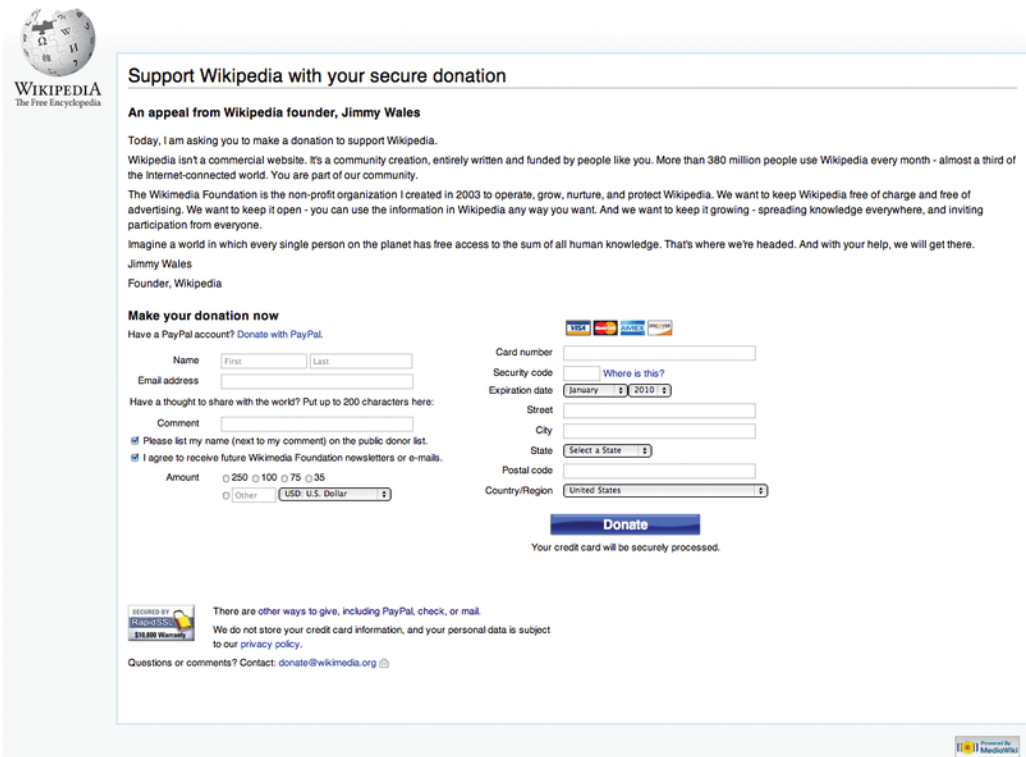


Figure 12.14 An example of the long tail.

This is sometimes referred to as the long tail of search. Figuring out those low volume, niche search terms can do wonders for a PPC campaign. Generally there is not much competition for those search terms, and the search term itself is very targeted.

12.7.4 Landing Pages

PPC advertising is not just about creating adverts and bidding for keywords. The process continues once a user has clicked on your advert. The page that the user reaches by clicking on an advert is called a **landing page**.



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Today, I am asking you to make a donation to support Wikipedia. Wikipedia isn't a commercial website. It's a community creation, entirely written and funded by people like you. More than 380 million people use Wikipedia every month - almost a third of the Internet-connected world. You are part of our community.

The Wikimedia Foundation is the non-profit organization I created in 2003 to operate, grow, nurture, and protect Wikipedia. We want to keep Wikipedia free of charge and free of advertising. We want to keep it open - you can use the information in Wikipedia any way you want. And we want to keep it growing - spreading knowledge everywhere, and inviting participation from everyone.

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Founder, Wikipedia

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Questions or comments? Contact: donate@wikimedia.org




Figure 12.15 The Wikipedia fundraising landing page.

Landing pages can make or break an advertising campaign. Poorly executed PPC campaigns will send all users to the home page of a website. Campaigns that convert will make sure that users land on a page that is relevant to their search with a very visible Call to Action. The aim is to keep the user as focused on the goal – conversion – as possible. Sending the user to the home page gives him too many other options to choose from.

For example, if someone searched for “Canon EOS 450D”, a poorly run campaign would send that user to www.canon.co.uk.

A better campaign would have the user clicking through to www.canon.co.uk/For_Home/Product_Finder/Cameras/Digital_SLR/EOS_450D/index.asp

Landing pages also indicate relevance to the search engine, which can increase the QualityScore of the advert, and in turn lower the CPC of the keyword. Adding pages to the website which are keyword rich can also carry SEO benefits.

PPC campaigns often have thousands of keywords, which can mean that there will be a lot of landing pages to be built! Creating dynamic landing pages

means that with a simple script, unique keyword rich landing pages can be created for every search. The script will take the keyword that the searcher has used, and insert it in predefined places on the landing page. The user will then be landing on a page that is highly relevant to their search!

Dynamic landing pages can be created with a simple script that will allow for a landing page to be created for every keyword in the PPC campaign.

note

AdWords offers an AdWords Starter Edition – sign up for an account to see how it works! You can sign up from [adwords.google.com](#). Just choose “Starter edition” after you click to sign up.

12.7.5 Planning and Setting up a Search PPC Campaign

1. Do your homework

For a successful campaign, you need a full online and an offline analysis of the business, customer demographics, the industry and competitors. While it is relatively quick to set up a campaign, pre-planning will show dividends later! You need a brand, an identity and a clear unique selling point. You only get three lines to advertise, you need to make sure you know what should be in there!

2. Define your goals

You need to know what you want to achieve with your PPC campaign. Branding campaigns, for example, are very different to campaigns to increase sales. What do you want users to do once they click on your advert?

3. Budget, Cost per Action (CPA) and targets

Determine how much you are willing to spend to achieve your goal – your target CPA. Decide how much budget you are going to allocate to your PPC campaign. If your goal is to increase revenue, your budget might be unlimited so long as revenue is increasing and you are within your target CPA.

4. Keyword research

You need to determine what keywords potential customers are likely to use when searching for the service that you offer. Along with that, you need to know:

- What common misspellings a customer might use.
- What words would show that they are not likely to purchase from you (words like *free* and *cheap*).

As part of your keyword research, you need to look at expected volumes for your keywords, so you know how to bid on keywords. See ***Tools of the Trade*** for some suggestions.

There are also tools which will show you similar or related keywords, so you can expand your keyword list even further. Again, find suggestions in ***Tools of the Trade***.

5. Write the adverts

Using your keyword research, write compelling adverts to promote your products. Adverts can be unique to a keyword, or you can group them and have a number of keywords for one advert.

Make sure you use an appropriate display URL, and that you target the landing page for each advert.

6. Place your bids

Based on your goals and keyword research, set the maximum bids for your keywords. Don't set these too high at this stage – you'll tweak the bids as you test your campaign. That being said, don't make them too low either or you won't get much traffic and it could affect your Quality Score.

7. Tracking

Get your tracking tags in place, especially any conversion tracking tags.

8. Measure, analyse, test, optimise!

With tracking in place, you can analyse your ROI down to a keyword level, and then focus on those keywords which are converting best.

Consider seeing how changing the text, image or video of your advert can increase the CTR, or your conversion rate. Test different landing pages to see what converts better.

Test the networks too! Your Bing campaign may perform better than Google, or your Facebook account may drive cheaper traffic. Always keep your goals in mind and work, work, work to achieve them.

12.8 tools of the trade

The foundation of search marketing is keyword research, and there are a number of tools that will both aid you in growing your keyword list, and in determining keyword volumes. Some are free and some are paid for. Many keyword volume tools have relied on Overture, and as Yahoo! is no longer supporting this tool, the information is not necessarily accurate. All these tools should be used as guidelines only. Test the data with your own campaigns to determine what works best for you.

Keyword volume tools:	Keyword suggestion tools:
www.freekeywords.wordtracker.com	adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal
http://overtureppc.info/google-adwords-keyword-search-tool-2/	www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
tools.seobook.com/general/keyword	tools.seobook.com/keyword-list/generator.php

Figure 12.16 The above table shows a list of tools which are useful for keyword research.

Google AdWords has an Ad Preview Tool, which allows you to see where your advert would appear on the page (without using the search engine and thus skewing data). This can be accessed at adwords.google.com/select/AdTargetingPreviewTool.

Some paid services that aid with keyword research are:

- www.wordtracker.com
- www.keywordsecret.com
- www.nichebot.com

Ad Preview Tool
Enter a keyword, then select a Google domain, display language, and location to preview ads.

Keyword:
Ex. Cell phones, dating services

Google domain:
Ex. google.com, google.co.uk

Display language:

Location:
Country:
Coordinates:
Ex. 32.1,-174.3 *or territory

Cape Town Accommodation - Cape Town Hotels - Western Cape ...
Western Cape Accommodation | Hotel. Select from our range of quality Western Cape Accommodation. We offer in-depth information on accommodation in Cape Town ...
www.westerncapeaccommodation.co.za/ - 19k -

Cape Town hotels, cape town accommodation, Luxury hotels Cape Town ...
Boutique Hotels Cape Town Cape Town Luxury Hotel Accommodation Luxury Boutique ... Victoria and Alfred Hotel, Cape Town Hotels, v&a waterfront accommodation ...
cybercapetown.com/ - 156k -

Town House Hotel - Cape Town
Cape Town Four star hotel - The TownHouse Hotel, accommodation and style for corporate and holiday travellers in the Cape Town CBD.
www.townhouse.co.za/ - 13k -

Cape Town Hotels
Cape Town Hotels / Cape Town Hotel Guide - Comprehensive directory of Hotels in ... To find Cape Town Hotels or an hotel in the Western Cape, select a City, ...
www.sa-venues.com/westcape1.htm - 71k -

Cape Town Hotels, Save More on Cheap Accommodation in Cape Town
Cape Town hotels - fast and secure reservation service provided by HotelClub Cape Town.
www.hotelclub.net/hotel.reservations/Cape_Town.htm - 39k -

Luxury Hotel, Boutique Hotels, Cape Town Hotel - Twelve Apostles ...
Oceanfront five star accommodation and the Azure Restaurant, only 10 minutes from the heart of Cape Town.

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Cape Town Hotel
Cape Town hotel deals
Book Cape Town hotel offers online
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The Place On The Bay
Camps Bay retreat, offers exclusive 5 Star Luxury Pent-House & Suites
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BookHotelRooms.com

Hotels in Cape Town
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Figure 12.17 An example of the Google Ad Preview Tool.

Spreadsheets, such as Microsoft's Excel, are useful to aid you in building your keyword lists. Getting to grips with functions such as concatenation and vlookup will be useful.

12.9 pros and cons

PPC campaigns are relatively quick to set-up, can provide high volumes of traffic, and are by nature highly trackable – what's not to love? But there are some pitfalls that you ought to be aware of.

- **Click fraud**

Click fraud occurs when your advert is clicked on by someone who is not a legitimate potential customer. Because an advertiser has to pay for every click

on his advert, sometimes unscrupulous competitors can click on the advert to force the payment. There are even automated bots that can click on adverts, costing advertisers millions!

The search engines, however, have taken measures to combat this. Advertisers can report suspected click fraud, and the search engines will refund invalid or fraudulent clicks after investigation.

What can you do? Keep an eye on your campaign. Any sudden leap in CTRs should be investigated, and you should pay particular attention to see if the conversion rate drops (which would indicate potential fraud) or stays the same. Pause the campaign if you suspect fraud, and alert the search engine.

- **Bidding wars and climbing CPCs**

High traffic keywords are expensive, and the battle to stay on top means that the CPC of these keywords is escalating. Convincing yourself that it's number one or nothing can result in burning through your campaign budget quickly, with nothing to show for it.

What can you do? Keep focused on your campaign goals and ROI, and keep investigating to find the (cheaper) niche keywords that work for you.

- **You gotta keep an eye on things**

PPC campaigns require a lot of monitoring, and the bigger your campaign gets, the more time this takes. PPC advertising can provide a fantastic ROI, but you need to check in and tweak regularly to make sure that it continues to perform for you.

- **Make the time**

What can you do? Make sure that you have allocated the time required to set up and run a successful campaign. There are also tools available that make managing large campaigns easier.

Remember that there are all the **good reasons** below (and many, many more!) why **PPC works for you**:

- **No to low cost barrier**

You only pay for traffic; there are no set-up fees involved.

- **Tracking every cent**

PPC advertising allows you to track your advertising spend down to a keyword level, so you can learn what works and what doesn't on a micro scale.

- **Targeted advert placement**

You can make your advertising relevant with the many filters available when selecting where to show your adverts.

- **You're giving your customers what they want**

PPC advertising lets you place your advert in front of people who are searching for your product. It lets you provide a solution, as opposed to creating an interruption. What more could you want?

12.10 summary

PPC advertising is advertising in which an advertiser pays for each click on his advert. PPC adverts are found on search engines, display sites and social networks. PPC adverts can be text adverts, text and image adverts, image adverts or rich media and video adverts.

PPC advertising is keyword, demographic, behavioural or interest based. On search engines, the CPC is determined by an auction, known as a Generalised Second Price auction.

Search targeted advertising refers to PPC adverts displayed on the SERPs. These are listed above and alongside the organic search results, and are marked as Sponsored.

Content targeting refers to PPC adverts being displayed on content pages, such as blogs and other websites. These are best organised by tightly themed adgroups.

The success of an advert may be determined by its CTR, but the success of a campaign will be determined by its conversion rate.

Clickthrough rate = clicks / impressions

Conversion rate = conversions / clicks

Elements for a successful campaign:

- Research your industry
- Define your goals
- Allocate budgets and target CPAs
- Keyword research
- Relevant ads with clear Calls to Action
- Bidding so as to maximise ROI
- Tracking
- Measure, analyse, test, optimise!

12.11 the bigger picture

PPC advertising and search engine optimisation (SEO) should go hand in hand to create an effective search engine marketing (SEM) strategy.

PPC provides an excellent resource to research keyword volumes and conversion success. The knowledge can then be used to improve the SEO of a site, as you will already know the relevance of these keywords to your intended audience. In turn, improved SEO rankings and social media interactions can help to reduce the CPC of your PPC campaign, and together with your PPC campaign, can see improved CTRs throughout.

PPC advertising can also help to give your brand immediate search engine presence for your offline campaigns, when these might not yet be highly ranked in the natural search results. PPC advertising can also be used together with online reputation management. If a company is unable to combat negative search results through the natural rankings, they are always able to bid for PPC adverts that can present their view.

12.12 case study: DStv Mobile and Quirk

DStv Mobile, the mobile version of the satellite television broadcaster, DStv, needed a small scale campaign to raise awareness of their new product which enabled users to watch selected channels on their mobile devices.

When DStv Mobile launched their ground breaking new service, Quirk was tasked with creating a campaign that would raise awareness and generate excitement among the users who would benefit the most from this new service. The campaign's primary objective was to drive consumers to the DStv Mobile site to get them to sign up.

The strategy involved the use of Google AdWords to drive qualified traffic to DStv Mobile's website. Particular users were targeted for this campaign based on who best suited the product (e.g. customers waiting at the Department of Home Affairs or those waiting in queues). Adverts were created and placed on the mobile network for users with smartphones, offering full Internet browser access, as well as for users with phones offering normal mobile access. The strategy aimed at attracting people before they went off to conduct their business, letting them know there was now something for them to do to occupy their time while waiting.

The campaign consisted of keywords targeting users interested in the channels that DStv Mobile offers, as well as more interest based keywords such as 'home affairs', in order to target users who were planning on standing in queues.

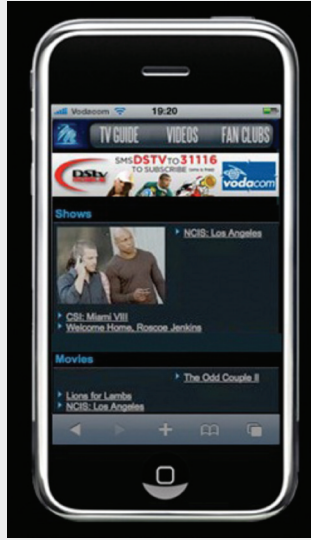


Figure 12.18 The DStv Mobile platform.

The return on investment indicators were as follows:

- The campaign received a clickthrough rate (CTR) of 3.4%
- Overall, the mobile network had a lower CPC and CTR, but a higher position
- The DStv related keywords and Interest based keywords from the search network campaigns generally drove the most traffic to the site with a very low CPC and high CTR.
- The best traffic driving keyword, “dstv mobile” received an astounding 33.51% CTR
- The next best keywords for driving traffic were “dstv”, “home affairs”, “supersport”, “mobile tv”, “traffic department”, “soccer games” and “traffic department” which received CTRs ranging from 1.49% up to 12.37%.
- The campaign achieved a very good CTR – indicating that the targeting of users is effective and that users found the adverts and the offer enticing and relevant.

Overall, the search network performed the best. “Quirk has been instrumental in assisting DStv Mobile to reach potential customers in an online environment” Maiyo Simapungula, Public Relations and Communications Manager DStv Mobile.

What made this campaign work was the fact that Quirk spent a lot of time brainstorming and trying to get into the heads of the DStv Mobile users in order to find the most powerful touch points. This means that costs could be kept down by serving adverts that resonated with the DStv Mobile audience, and that targeted users at exactly the right time, when they were likely to welcome a distraction.

case study questions

1. Why did Quirk decide to go with Google AdWords as a tool for this campaign?
2. Why did they choose to target users with key phrases like 'traffic department' and 'home affairs'?
3. Why do you think this campaign had such a high clickthrough rate?

chapter questions

1. Why would competitors commit click fraud?
2. When should you use certain search types for AdWords, and why would this matter? How does it affect the number of conversions?
3. Why should one use landing pages when running a PPC campaign, and how does this affect the number of conversions?

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further reading

- www.ppchero.com – Including practical step by step guides to improving your PPC campaigns, PPC Hero provides regular posts on all things PPC
- www.gordonchoi.com – Gordon Choi's insightful comments on PPC and search come from a wealth of experience

What's inside: An **introduction** to video search engine optimisation, the **key terms and concepts** you need for this chapter and the **history** of video-hosting as three young men **took the first steps towards creating YouTube**. We look at how this video search giant **works**, discuss how web search has changed, how **people find videos**, as well as seven **vital steps to creating and maintaining a video channel**. There is an explanation of how social media affects video content and a **summary** of the chapter.

13.1 introduction

In 2011, Google was the world's largest search engine with billions of searches a day and over 60% market share. Interestingly, the second largest search engine was in fact YouTube, the popular video sharing website. In November 2008, YouTube overtook Yahoo in the US to become the second largest search engine with 2.791 billion monthly searches.

Online, we turn to search engines to help us answer questions and to find content. That content can be anything, from images to text, and of course, video. Text content can be read by search engines, but content such as images and video cannot easily be read by search engines. With more and more people using search to find video content, understanding how to optimise videos for search is an important part of any digital strategy.

According to YouTube, there are more than three billion video views a day on its website, while every minute, 48 hours of video is uploaded.

Videos can come from anyone, and can come from anywhere. Small home videos can experience massive global reach, as was the case with the popular *Charlie Bit My Finger* video which has accumulated 338 million views as of June 2011. Musicians often use social video platforms to share their music videos and, of course, brands use video sharing platforms to communicate messages via video. People are increasingly interacting with brands via video by creating opinion videos, parodies and responses.

In 2007, Google released a major change to its search engine results pages (SERP). Along with other search engines such as Bing, Google now serves media such as images and video in search results. This means that video content now plays an increasingly important role in search engine optimisation. Not only can optimising videos for search increase your search engine ranking, but data shows that it increases clickthrough rate from the search engine results pages, and that these visits are longer and more engaged than other search visits.

Not only does video content help to connect with your audience, but it can help to reach them through search as well.

13.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Annotations	A comment or instruction (usually added as text) to a YouTube video. A YouTube annotation may contain links directing users to other pages within YouTube, or if a brand is willing to pay, to outside websites.

Google AdWords	Google's main advertising product and primary source of revenue. AdWords offers pay per click (PPC) advertising, cost per thousand (CPM) advertising, and site-targeted advertising for text, banner, video and rich-media ads.
InStream videos	A video advertisement that plays before the start of the actual selected video. Typically 15 to 30 seconds in length.
Promoted videos	YouTube and Google AdWords 'Promoted Videos' is an advertising solution which allows users to promote their video content within the YouTube website.
Search engine results page (SERP)	The page that shows the results for a search on a search engine.
Social Media Optimisation (SMO)	Social Media Optimisation, Social SEO or SMO is the process of methodising social media activity with the intent of attracting visitors to specific website content. For example, Facebook tabs, Flash games, YouTube videos.
Thumbnail	The still image that is shown at the start of the video. This can be selected, and can make a video more enticing.
Views	This is the number of times a video has been seen. Remember, multiple views can come from one user.
Video syndication	The manner in which you attain optimum distribution and search coverage for your videos. This can include multiple facets of optimised distribution.
Viral video	This is a video that becomes immensely popular, leading to its spread through word-of-mouth on the Internet via email, social networks and other hosting websites.
Video search engine optimisation (VSEO)	Is optimising videos for search engines, similar to how one would optimise a website to rank higher on the SERPs.

13.3 history

While there are several video sharing sites, including Vimeo (www.vimeo.com), Daily Motion (www.dailymotion.com) and Metacafe (www.metacafe.com), the biggest video sharing site in the world is YouTube (www.youtube.com).

Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim founded YouTube in 2005, registering the domain name in the February of that year. The first video (Me at the Zoo) was uploaded in April 2005, while YouTube previewed in May 2005 and launched six months later. It was acquired by Google in November 2006 for \$1.65 billion. Their most recent figures show 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute, over 3 billion video views a day, and over 200 million views a day on mobile.

note

Want to see the first ever YouTube video uploaded? It's at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQXAC9IVRw.

Online video is not just about creating content, it's about getting viewers to that content. For many, that is where video search comes in. YouTube is said to account for about 28% of searches on Google sites. And, in 2007, Google introduced blended search results, where media such as images and video, is included in the search engine results pages (SERPs). Bing and Yahoo have introduced similar changes to their search results pages. All this has served to bring video closer to the mainstream.

With so much time being spent by Internet users on video sharing sites, advertising soon followed. In November 2008, YouTube introduced Promoted Videos, a paid for service where you can bid to have your video listed next to other videos and in YouTube search results. Like PPC advertising on search engines, you only pay when someone clicks through to your video and not for being listed.

Over the years, YouTube and other video sharing sites have continued to release innovative advertising and community building solutions for marketers. However, this chapter focuses on those solutions which are related to video search.

13.4 how it works

Most search on the web is keyword based: you type keywords relevant to your query into a search box, and the results of the search should list content that matches your keywords. Whether you are using a search box on a website, on YouTube, or Google, this outlines the very basic way we expect search to work.

The search engine which is returning results is trying to match your keywords to the content it has indexed, and is also trying to determine how to rank the results so that you get the most relevant content at the top of your search results page.

This is all covered in great detail in the *Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)* chapter. Optimising video for search involves understanding the basics of SEO, and then the particular challenges and tactics of optimising video content.

When we search, we use keywords to describe what we want to find. Search engines use those keywords to match to content. Search engines rely on being able to use text in the content to determine what it is about, and other indicators to determine how relevant that content is. When it comes to web pages, search engines can "read" the text on the page to determine what the page is about, and can measure the links coming in to determine how relevant the page is. When it comes to video, the search engine cannot "watch" or "read" the video, and instead must rely on other text on the page to determine what the video is about. The search engine also needs to look for ways to measure relevance.

This is becoming important not just for the search boxes on sites such as YouTube, but also for search results on Google. With blended, or universal, search results pages, video is listed along with other media such as images and with the usual web results.

Marketers and website owners now need to optimise all their various forms of content – be they text pages, images or videos – in order to achieve better rankings. Video search engine optimisation (VSEO) involves the use of basic SEO foundations and additional creative optimisation methods to ensure that online video content appears higher up on the SERPs.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "the hoff". The search bar indicates "About 5,850,000 results (0.16 seconds)". On the left, there are navigation tabs for "Everything", "Images", "Videos", "News", and "Shopping". The main results area is divided into three sections:

- Web results:**
 - [David Hasselhoff - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#) - Cached. Snippet: "In 2009, Hasselhoff took part in 'The Hoff: When Scott Came to Stay' for UK television channel Living. During the two part special, Scott Mills lived with ... Early life - Career - Personal life - Filmography"
 - [HoffSpace - Make HoffSpace Your Space...](#) - Cached. Snippet: "22 Jun 2011 - Official site with biography, news, updates, his films, music and photo gallery."
- Images for the hoff:** A row of six thumbnail images showing David Hasselhoff in various poses and outfits.
- Videos for the hoff:**
 - [David Hasselhoff - Jump in My Car - video.google.com](#) - 3 min - Now, Vol. 65 [UK 45 Tracks] (2006)

On the left side, there are filters for "Any time" (Past hour, Past 24 hours, Past 2 days, Past week, Past month, Past year, Custom range...) and "All results" (Sites with images).

Figure 13.1 A search for the words “the hoff” brings up website and video results.

Online video serving

There are two options for making your video content available online. These are not mutually exclusive and there are techniques for both to ensure the best distribution and search coverage for your video.

Online video can be **hosted** on your own site, or it can be **posted** to one or many video distribution channels.

The main advantage of posting a video is the opportunity to exploit an already existing large audience quickly. These websites also usually have a built-in social and viral media aspect to their user experience. As with universal search, the current video-sharing sites tend to have simplified algorithms which are easier to take advantage of, leading to more rapid universal search exposure.

If your video is hosted, the obvious advantage is that you have control over the whole website on which it is hosted, from the look and feel to on-page text, metadata as well as the user experience. When it comes to advertising and related content, you control both, and any other monetisation of the content is yours to decide. Traffic and links go directly to your website, and so can be integral to a longer-term search strategy.

Video discovery - How users find video

There are four main ways in which users find content and video online:

- A user knows what he/she is looking for and goes directly to a search engine or video search engine to search for content (e.g. Google, YouTube).
- A user follows recommendations from others, whether on emailed links and content, social bookmarking and sharing services or social networks and social media such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.
- Someone knows exactly what they are looking for and navigates to the appropriate URL directly (e.g. <http://www.quirk.biz/courses/home>).
- Users can find videos through paid advertisements and promotions.

13.4.1 YouTube Video Search Optimisation (getting ranked, fast)

YouTube is the dominant player in the video sharing market, and is owned by Google. While we focus in this chapter on optimising for YouTube in particular, many of the same approaches apply to other video sharing sites.

Once you've determined how users are already accessing your videos and where they appear in SERPs, you can use various techniques to improve your rankings.

While YouTube, like Google, keeps its search algorithms a closely guarded trade secret, digital marketers can speculate, as well as experiment to see what works, and more importantly, what doesn't.

Firstly, the following components are evaluated on a keyword and key phrase level by the search engine spiders:

- Titles
- Descriptions
- Tags
- Playlist additions
- Inbound links

Additionally, YouTube defines relevance in accordance with the popularity of a given video as well as the interaction taking place around it. The following factors play a role in the algorithm which determines relevance to a particular search:

- Views
- Channel views
- Ratings
- Comments
- Shares
- Embeds
- Subscribers
- Flagging
- Age of video

note

For the YouTube AdSense program, views are only counted after 30 seconds of a video being watched or, if the video is shorter than that, the entire length of a video watched. In order to ensure that unscrupulous individuals and businesses don't inflate their view numbers, YouTube uses technology to identify 'views' by spam bots, malware and other software and removes these from the count. This legitimises the view count beneath the video.

Title: Savanna Wedding Crashers | Crash The Royal Wedding

Views: 6,165

Rating: 16 likes, 0 dislikes

Description: To crash the royal wedding of the century you'll need a good cover story. Savanna is imitating 5FM listeners to phone in and state a believable name and cover story to Grant and Anele. Take these whoppers, for example. "George Winstanley, Prince Harry's father" or "Sophie Lemonton, the palace horticulturalist"

Comments: Sign In or Sign Up now to post a comment. If there's one advert that DOESN'T annoy the shit outta me, it's this one! Love it! RÅmen771 3 months ago. South Africa's adverts rock! ChaneMinnear 3 months ago. Well done! Kamakombus 3 months ago.

Figure 13.2 A breakdown of the various factors which determine relevance using Savanna Wedding Crashers | Crash The Royal Wedding on YouTube.

Keeping YouTube content current and entertaining is vital if a video is very new. This will allow the video to engage with viewers. Remember, a new video growing in popularity (i.e. views), will take preference in the SERP over an older video with more views.

Optimising posted video

Optimising video for video sharing sites such as YouTube doesn't just mean that you will appear in search results on the video sharing site, but also on SERPs such as Google. While each video sharing site will use its own algorithm, the guidelines below can be considered best practice across most of the video sharing sites.

1. Video title is very important.

Video title is one of the first things a user sees when clicking through to a video, and is used first and foremost by the video search engines to determine the relevance of your videos. Your most important keywords should appear in the first three words of the title. Longer, descriptive titles are better than short, concise and obscure ones.

Title:

Sowing the Seeds for Rocking the Daisies 2010

2. Use long descriptions.

Descriptions are what search engines are looking for to determine what the video is about. Use your important keywords here! You can include as much information as possible, but put the most important stuff in the first 25 characters. You can include a link in your description, enabling you to direct users to other content that you have.

Description:

To check out more of our rocking videos, visit
<http://www.rockingthedaisies.com>

Sowing the Seeds is an annual teaser music festival giving
 music fans a taste of what to look forward to at Rocking the

3. Use the tags to input several keywords, but remember that order matters.

Put your most important keywords first. You can also capitalise on popular search terms and piggyback on popular or topical phrases. However, ensure that these are at least somewhat relevant to your video and utilise terms from the same category. YouTube Suggest and Google Suggest are useful tools in assisting with this.

Tags:

"the dirty skirts" "7th son" "seventh son" "aking" "a king" "aking lyrics" "aking band" "aking music" "jeremy loops" "hot water band" "rocking the daisies" "rocking the daisies tv" "rocking daisies" "rockin the daisies" "rocking the daisies 2011" "music festival" "music festival 2011" "music festivals" "music

4. Encourage comments, subscriptions and ratings, embedding and sharing.

Don't forget to respond to relevant comments. It is vital to assure users that you are taking them seriously. This is a key point to remember if you want to create a thriving online community.

To incite discussion, consider posting a comment as soon as you have uploaded a video. Pose a provocative question to spark discussion and lead the conversation – the absolute key to success in the social media space is engagement.



Figure 13.3 YouTube comments.

5. Optimise the thumbnail.

Consider adding a thumbnail frame. YouTube allows you to choose the thumbnail image to be a quarter, half way or three quarters' through the video. Simply optimising the thumbnail image can encourage increased clickthroughs and views, which helps to increase search visibility.



Figure 13.4 Three thumbnail choices on a YouTube video.

6. Use annotations to link from and to other video properties.

Annotations allow you to add text boxes with clickable URLs (which are crawled by the search engine spiders as well) at points of your choosing in your video. Annotations in already popular and current videos can be used to drive traffic to new videos, although it should be standard practice to include them in a video as soon as it has been uploaded.

The nature of YouTube is such that the number of views for pages on which videos are watched, or watchpages, is always higher than channel views. However, if a paid search campaign is being run, the option to play clicked videos on the channel page exists. This is optimal as it could boost interactions with the branded channel header image, increase engagement with the playlist and raise the channel view stats.

note

How to pick a YouTube thumbnail:

Sign in to your YouTube account.

Click your username (in the top right-hand corner of the screen). A drop-down menu will appear.

Click [My Videos](#).

Find the video whose thumbnail you'd like to change and click its Edit button.

On the following page under the heading, Video Thumbnail, click on one of three thumbnails to use as a picture to represent your video. Once you've chosen your preferred still, the border around it will become highlighted. Finally, click the Save Changes button at the bottom of the page.

note

Don't use annotations in such a way that it might cause annoyance or frustration for viewers. For example, don't place an annotation over the climax of a trailer or music video, as this will obscure the view and irritate users.

7. Upload videos regularly to ensure continuous channel activity and topical interest.

Consider the nature of the brand and what you are trying to communicate to your viewers, you must decide how often videos are uploaded. But remember, the more videos you upload, the higher your channel will rank due to Google picking up on your fresh content.

The amount of content you upload is also dependent on the service or product your brand offers. It's a careful balance of not overloading your channel with useless media and keeping content fresh and engaging.

Optimising hosted video

If you are hosting your video content yourself, you can and should still optimise the content around it for best search opportunities. As with posted video, it's the text content on the page with the video that is so important.

Make sure that your page title is descriptive, as well as the video title and the video file name. The text on the page with the video is important, so optimise it to reflect the content of the video.

You can also make use of speech to text software such as Blinkx or Spinvox to transcribe the video. The text can then be used in the video metadata.

Social sharing:

Whether your videos are hosted or posted, you should initiate and encourage sharing through bookmarking and ensuring access across various platforms, e.g. YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn as well as your company's website. Social sharing and recommendations are increasingly relevant ranking factors for search engines.

Paying for placement

Like Google's PPC advertising for search, you can pay to have your video recommended on YouTube. YouTube calls this its Promoted Video programme. It is available to any YouTube user.

With Promoted Videos, you are able to bid on searches or popular videos, and have your video content displayed alongside the search results or other videos. You only pay when someone clicks through to view your video.

Promoted Videos are a cost effective and quick way to promote video content, especially if the content is topical. It's targeted and controlled, and can be a good start to VSEO.

13.4.2 Measuring Success

The Internet allows for detailed tracking and analysis, enabling future campaign optimisation. When creating video content, use the various measurement options available to determine what you can do better going forward.

YouTube Insight is a free tool which enables anyone with a YouTube account to view detailed statistics about the videos they upload to the site. You can see how often videos are viewed in different geographic regions, as well as how popular they are relative to all videos in that market over a given period of time.

You can also delve deeper into the lifecycle of videos, such as how long it takes for a video to become popular, and what happens to video views as popularity peaks.

Using these metrics, you can increase your videos' view counts and improve popularity on the site. For example, you might learn that your videos are most popular on Wednesdays, that they have a huge following in Spain, or that new videos which play off previous content become more popular more quickly.

With this information, you can concentrate on posting compelling fresh content which appeals to selected target audiences, and post these videos on days when you know these viewers are on the site. You could even go a step further and customise the video, dubbing it in Spanish. The range of possibilities to customise – and optimise – your content is limited only by the brand's level of willingness.

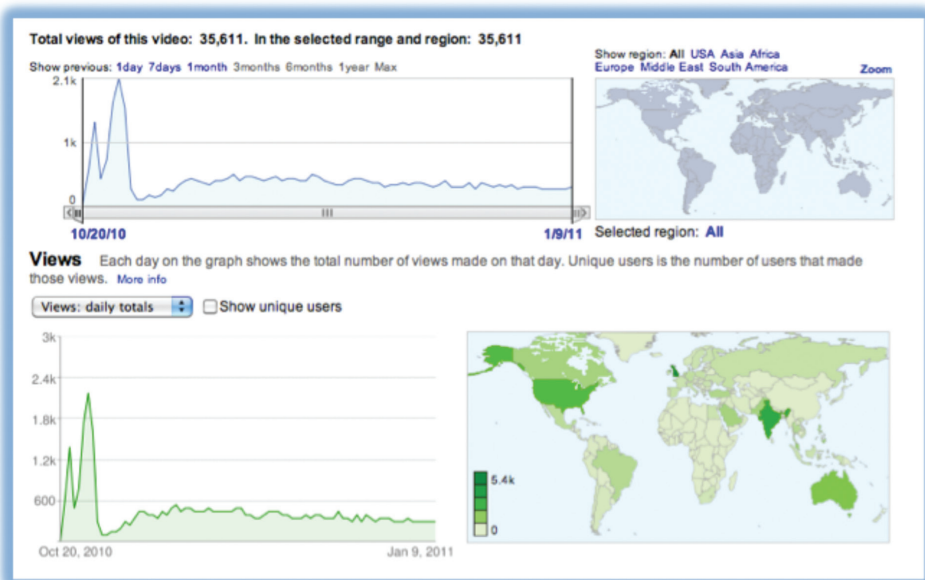


Figure 13.5 A breakdown of views for a particular range and region for a video.

Furthermore, you can access a breakdown of how viewers discovered a specific video, which can then be used to optimise the keywords, tags and descriptions of videos.

13.5 pros and cons

Posting regular video content shouldn't result in any negativity, provided it is done in a focused, engaging way. That said, there are definitely pros and cons to the way in which you decide to optimise video content.

Given the continuous divergence of online video into two distinct areas, namely social video and video as a tool to increase search rankings, the lines can easily become blurred as to which direction you are heading in. Which form of video optimisation will work better for you? Where should you turn your efforts?

Remember that essentially what you are trying to do is improve your business online so you need to define what your exact goal is. If you want to drive users from search engines to your site, put your energy in VSEO. If your goal is to drive users from other destinations to watch your videos, you should place emphasis on social media optimisation (SMO).

- **Video search engine optimisation**

Search engines are placing a lot of emphasis on usage data in determining a site or a video's relevance to a user's search query. This will soon become the single largest factor in determining search rankings and in displaying related content.

This will be even more heavily emphasised on YouTube than on Google, as users visit the site to browse. Take a look at the *Search Engine Optimisation* chapter; its concepts are essential to your success.

- **Social media optimisation**

Social media optimisation for video focuses on user engagement with your content. Instead of looking at ranking factors, you are looking primarily at your audience. Ask yourself what they would enjoy and what would make their experience memorable (and therefore worth re-telling). You want them to spread the word, via email, chat, Twitter, Facebook, and essentially get your video to go viral.

By studying analytics, Insights and comments, you can see which videos on your channel/site are providing users with what they're looking for. You can then choose to advertise your best videos with the various formats YouTube and Google have on offer.

The number of views you get is an important factor in getting ranked or featured on YouTube and, by pushing your best content through the paid medium, you can get the ball rolling and significantly increase your chances of picking up organic traction (both within YouTube and Google's universal SERPs).

13.6 summary

Video has become an integral part of the online world. The potential for exposure - as well as interaction - is massive, and brands which fail to capitalise on this risk being left behind as competitors build thriving communities.

As with most content, it is up to the brand to decide how to represent its video content. Videos can be hosted on popular video-sharing websites to capitalise on already existing audiences and developed interfaces, or on bespoke websites which allow for free reign in customisation.

Brands should then aim to optimise their videos on the chosen platforms to increase their visibility on search engines.

Creating a healthy community is also important in increasing exposure. Very rarely, if ever, does an audience come to video content without input from the creators. On top of optimising for search and other tweaks, brands should upload content regularly or risk losing any ground gained.

Social media should also be considered as its platforms allow for the sharing of content, as well as commentary.

Overall, brands should be aware that there is no quick fix for video. It requires planning and investment as well as long-term commitment to creating brand ambassadors.

13.7 tools of the trade

Both these tools are in their beta stage but, in conjunction with Google AdWords, are increasingly being used to optimise video content.

YouTube Targeting Tool

- www.google.com/videotargeting/

YouTube 'Insights for Audience'

- www.google.com/ads/innovations/ytinsights.html

13.8 case study: Old Spice and YouTube

In order to appeal to a new hip market, Old Spice, together with their advertising agency, Weiden+Kennedy, created a YouTube campaign that produced results far beyond anyone's imagination.

In 2010, the Proctor and Gamble brand, Old Spice, released a hugely successful Superbowl advert, 'the Man Your Man Could Smell Like'. It featured Isaiah Mustafa, a handsome, former NFL wide receiver, who promised women that he was the 'man your man could smell like' even if no man could ever be as truly manly as The Old Spice Man.

Old Spice | The Man Your Man Could Smell Like

OldSpice 205 videos

SMELL LIKE A MAN, MAN.
Old Spice

0:30 / 0:33 360p

Like

33,616,530

Uploaded by OldSpice on Feb 4, 2010

We're not saying this body wash will make your man smell into a romantic millionaire jet fighter pilot, but we are insinuating it.

121,954 likes, 2,144 dislikes

As Seen On: [Mashable!](#)

Figure 13.6 A screenshot of the Old Spice video on YouTube indicating the number of times it has been viewed.

To build on this success and to further engage with the fledgling online community, Old Spice and Wieden+Kennedy took a fresh approach and created a series of personalised 'response' videos, broadcast on YouTube, to comments posted about the video. To do this, they created a custom program that automatically pulled in people's comments from Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.

Between July 12 and 14 2010, the Old Spice guy engaged directly with fans and consumers, sending out almost 200 response videos!

This produced some amazing results for the brand. According to Visible Measures, the Old Spice response videos had more viral views in the first 24 hours than Obama's Victory Speech!

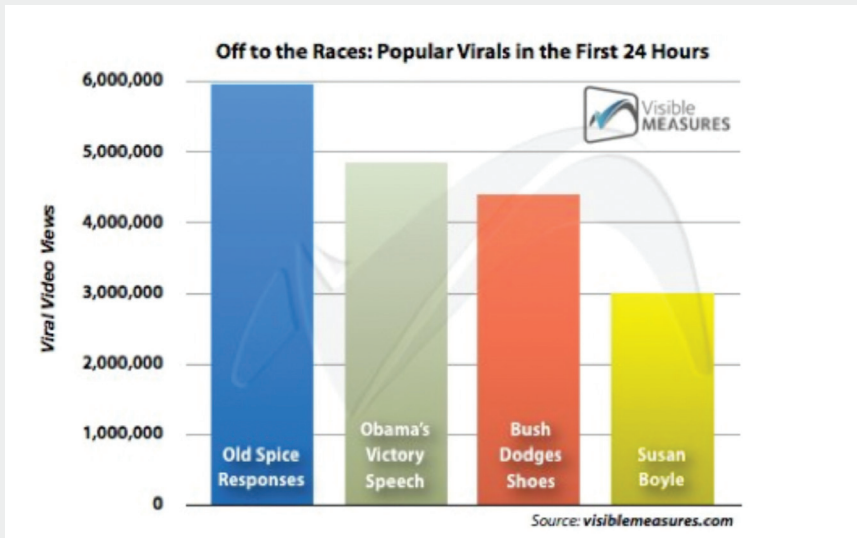


Figure 13.7 In comparison to other well known virals, the Old Spice advert had a significant viewership.

In the three months following the campaign, the brand also saw sales jump by 55 percent and the month after that, by 107 percent (Nielsen).

Due to the success of the original video and the response videos, Old Spice has seen some huge changes to its online presence and popularity.

- The Old Spice YouTube channel has had over 26 million channel views with over 266 thousand subscribers.
- They have over 1.5 million Facebook Fans.
- Their Twitter account has over 125 thousand Twitter followers.
- The original video has received over 33 million views on YouTube.

(July 2011)

In terms of optimising search, Old Spice leveraged social media to gain a strong foothold on the search engine result pages (SERP). The video itself was optimised for search through the clever use of tags. Instead of only tagging the video with generic terms related to the video (such as Old Spice or Isaiah Mustafa), Old Spice added lines from the advert which had become as popular as the video itself. Because fans were tweeting and posting lines like "tickets are now diamonds", these tags were added, further optimising the video for search. This means that when a user searches for "tickets are now diamonds", see following page for what the SERP displays.

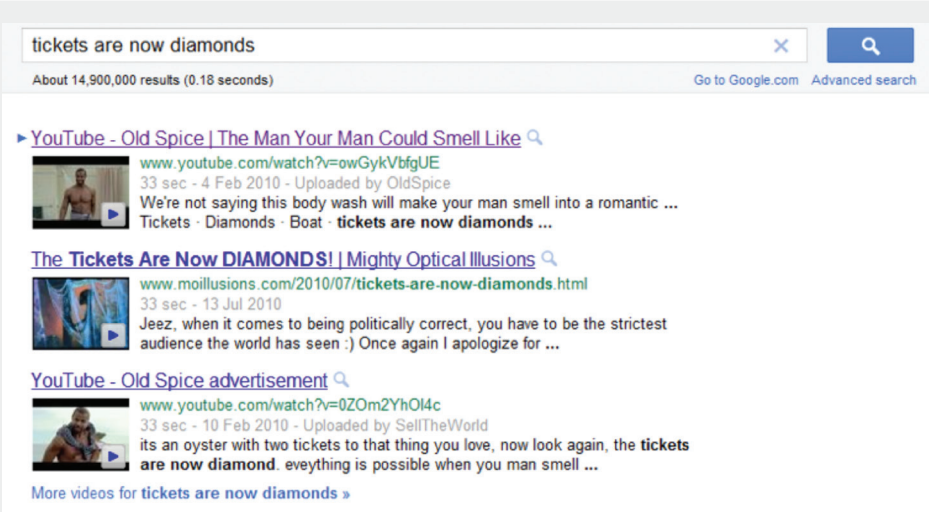


Figure 13.8 A screenshot illustrating that terms relevant to the campaign were optimised for, and are therefore served in search results.

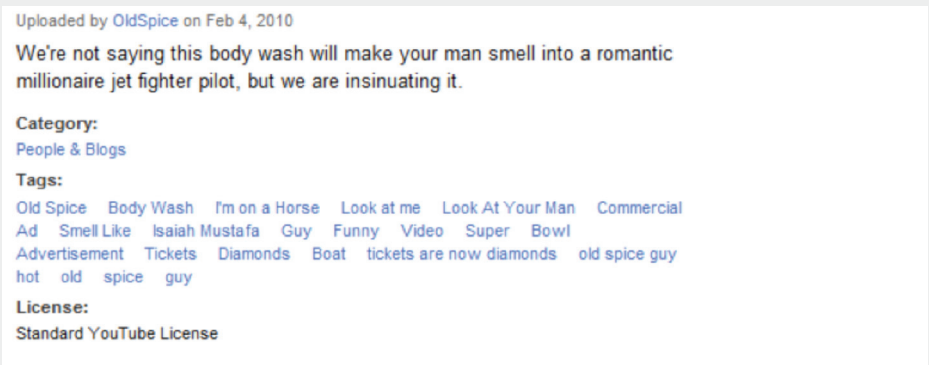


Figure 13.9 Certain tags were used to optimise the campaign.

So, what else made the video so successful?

- The initial video was entertaining, appealing to the audience.
- It used social networking and links with other channels (Twitter, Facebook etc.) to encourage interaction and engagement.
- The videos were short, simple and consistent.
- The follow-up videos created trust in the viewers. They gave people direct contact with the brand and showed that they were listening to viewers – even in a playful sense.
- The videos were personalised and by responding directly to certain consumers, they created demand from others to get a response from the Old Spice Man.
- While the original campaign had a short-lived duration, with the response videos being released over a two day period, the impact for the Old Spice brand continues to live on, with Old Spice featuring Mustafa in a video uploaded in March 2011.

case study questions

1. Why do you think Old Spice Guy was such a success?
2. How did the existence of YouTube contribute to this campaign?
3. How would you have used video search engine optimisation for this campaign?

chapter questions

1. Why should commenting on videos be encouraged?
2. What sort of personalisation would self-hosting of a video allow?
3. How do you feel social media affects video marketing?
4. What possible obstacles could a brand face when seeding a viral video?

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[Accessed 27 June 2011]

further reading

- www.reelseo.com/ - Regularly posts updates and developments in the world of video SEO.
- www.youtube-global.blogspot.com - YouTube's official blog. If there are announcements likely to affect a video optimiser, this is where you'll find them first.

What's inside: An introduction to **social media channels** and the **important differences** between these and more **traditional forms** of media. You'll find an explanation of the categories that these channels fall into; **content creation, sharing, aggregation** and more as well as the powerful role they can play in the marketing process.

14.1 introduction

In many ways, social media epitomises what the web is about: collaboration and the sharing of content, ideas and information. Social media is behind the explosion of content available on the Internet, as the various channels have allowed anyone with an Internet connection to be able to create and share content easily and for free. Because social media has so many participants, it is also very dynamic. In fact, this is the chapter that is most likely to be out of date the second this book has gone to print.

Simply put, social media are media (from written to visual to audio to audio visual) that are designed to be shared. Sharing means that it is easy to comment on, that it is easy to send, and that there are no high costs associated with viewing the media. And, because of the connected nature of the Internet, it means that sharing, commenting and viewing can all be tracked and measured.

Social media are also referred to as Web 2.0, consumer generated media, citizen media and new media. In fact, comparing social media to traditional media is probably the most useful way of defining what exactly this means.

Traditional Media	Social Media
Fixed, unchangeable	Instantly updateable
Commentary limited and not real-time	Unlimited real-time commentary
Limited, time-delayed bestseller lists	Instant popularity gauge
Archives poorly accessible	Archives accessible
Limited media mix	All media can be mixed
Committee publishers	Individual publishers
Finite	Infinite
Sharing not encouraged	Sharing and participation encouraged
Control	Freedom

Figure 14.1 A table comparing social media with traditional media.

The Internet, and the software developed to run on it, has made it simple for anyone to publish and distribute media. It has also made it simple for anyone to access the content that has been published.

The realm of social media is about collaboration, users generating content, sharing and, most of all, it is about connecting.

This chapter focuses on the various social media channels, while the next chapters looks at how to use those channels strategically.

14.2 history

While in 2011 social networks such as Facebook are the first thing that come to mind when you think of social media; blogs are probably the earliest well-known example of social media. One of the earliest online journals recorded was www.links.net, the online diary of Justin Hall, which he kept for 11 years from 1994 (Harmanci 2005). From the very first days of the Internet, early adopters used the Internet to create personal content.

These online diaries were referred to as “weblogs”, but in April or May of 1999, Peter Merholz unwittingly coined the term “blog” by adding the following to the sidebar of his website peterme.com:

“For What It’s Worth
I’ve decided to pronounce the word “weblog” as wee’- blog. Or “blog” for short.”

Developers began creating tools that made it easier for anyone to start a blog. Blogger, a popular blogging platform, was launched in August 1999 and acquired by Google in 2003. In 2001, Wikipedia, probably the most well-known wiki, was created.

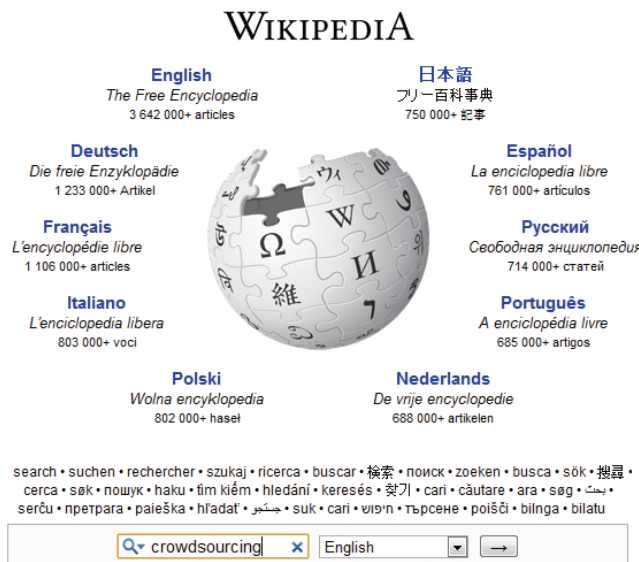


Figure 14.2 Wikipedia, probably the most well-known wiki.

Technorati, which tracks blogs and tagged social media, launched in 2002. As of April 2008, Technorati was tracking 112.8 million blogs and noted in 2007 that 1.4 new blogs were being created every second.

Social media is not just about blogging, though, and several platforms that made sharing other kinds of content easier have come to the fore. Flickr, the online photo sharing tool, was launched in February 2004 and bought by Yahoo! in June 2005.

By this stage, the social media buzzwords and neologisms were being picked up by the mainstream press, and in 2004, Merriam-Webster dictionary chose “blog” as the word of the year.

YouTube, the online video sharing website, previewed in May 2005 and launched six months later. It was acquired by Google in November 2006 for \$1.65 billion. Their most recent figures show 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute (2011).

Twitter, which allows for users to share 140 character tweets, launched in October 2006. As of July 2011, they had over 200 million registered users, and 200 million tweets were written per day.

Facebook launched (originally as Thefacebook) in February 2004. Membership was restricted to Harvard students and then expanded to students at a number of other colleges in the USA. In late 2005, membership expanded to highschools and a select number of companies. Membership was opened to anyone worldwide older than 13 as of September 2006. Today, Facebook boasts more than 600 million active users, who collectively spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook.

In 2006, Time Magazine named “You” as the Time Person of the Year for “the growth and influence of user-generated content on the internet.” In 2010, Time Magazine named Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, as the Time Person of the Year.



Figure 14.3 In 2006 Time Magazine named “You” as the Time Person of the Year.

14.3 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Blog	A blog is a type of website that allows users (bloggers) to post entries on different topics and often allows readers to comment on these posts.
Blogosphere	The world of blogs, bloggers and blog posts.
Bookmarking	Saving the web address of a web page or website so that it may be easily referred to. Bookmarks can be managed with a browser, or with an online tool.
Crowdsourcing	Harnessing the skills, talents and ideas of a broader community, usually through social media.
Chiclets	A small icon adjacent to a blog post, article or web page to indicate the availability of an RSS feed, or to allow users to share the information via social media. Named after the gum of the same name because of its unique, pillow-shaped icon.
Flog	A fake blog is known as a flog.
Folksonomy	Categorisation or taxonomy based on social media tags.
Permalink	A unique URL which points to the permanent location of a single blog post and its associated comments and TrackBacks.
Ping	Packet Internet Groper - a utility that verifies a link or a connection to the Internet.
Social Network	In the online sense, this refers to a type of website model where individual members become part of a broader virtual community.
Tag	In social media, tags indicate or label what content is about.
Taxonomy	Classification and division into ordered categories, usually hierarchical. In social media, taxonomy can refer to the categorisation of content on the Internet.
Trackback	A mechanism used in a blog that shows a list of entries in other blogs that refer to a post on the first blog.
Vlog	A video based blog, also called a video blog.
Wiki	A simple website that can be edited in real-time by a number of users.

14.4 how it works

Social media has changed the world in which we market. It can be used as an integral part of an online marketing campaign. Social media is all about the ways that we create, connect and share content online.

The following chapter addresses the strategic use of social media to achieve a variety of outcomes. Here we look at the various social media channels. Categorising social media channels is challenging, but it is a useful way to compare the various channels.

Social media channels can be categorised as:

- **Bookmarking and aggregating:** social curation and sharing of content.
- **Content creating:** using social channels to create and share content.
- **Social networks:** social channels that are built around social profiles.
- **Location:** a subset of social networks that are based on location.

14.4.1 Bookmarking and Aggregating

If there are websites you visit often, or that you would like to keep as a reference to come back to, it is easy to use your browser to “bookmark” them. This means that you store the URL so that you can locate it again easily. It also gives you a personal library of websites that you can store on your computer.

Social bookmarking sites, however, allow you to store these links online, use tags to describe them and share these lists with other users. Some of these sites allow you to submit URLs that other users vote on, while others allow you to use the tags saved to browse through the lists and libraries that have been generated.

Websites which are intended to encourage users to submit content to bookmarking and aggregating sites use chiclets. These are buttons placed around the content that make it easier to submit and share the article.



Figure 14.4 Examples of chiclets.

These services allow you to see what the community of web users finds useful, interesting or humorous. You are able to find other users with similar interests to yours, and explore the websites that they have found that you might not have come across yet.

Social bookmarking allows like-minded people to share interesting and relevant content with one another easily. It can also be an excellent tool for members of a company or organisation to earmark relevant websites and articles. Content submitted to a social bookmarking or aggregating site can dramatically increase traffic to a website, and expose the site to many new eyeballs.

Del.icio.us (www.delicious.com) is a social bookmarking site created in 2003 by Joshua Schacter. It was designed to be a site which would help Internet users organise online media in a quick, easy to access and user-friendly format. Currently owned by Yahoo!, the primary function of delicious is to allow you to store all of your bookmarks online and then to allow you to access those bookmarks from any computer anywhere in the world. del.icio.us is more of a community based tool in comparison with the other social bookmarking tools out there, as it allows others to see your bookmarks. Essentially it lets you identify other people whose interests and concerns parallel yours and grants you access to all of their bookmarks as well.

Check out www.delicious.com/quirkemarketingtextbook to see some of the URLs we think are relevant to your digital marketing studies and career.

The screenshot shows the Delicious.com interface for a user named 'quirkemarketingtextbook'. The page displays a list of bookmarks with their titles, dates, and associated tags. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Bookmarks', 'People', and 'Tags'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area shows a list of bookmarks, each with a title, date, and a set of tags. The number of bookmarks for each tag is displayed in a blue box. On the right side, there is a 'Tags' section with a list of 'Top 10 Tags' and their respective counts.

Bookmark Title	Date	Tags	Count
RGB Chart & Multi Tool	17 MAY 11	design, tools, colours	81
Fi Case Study for Civil War 150		design, inspiration, case, usability, infographics	81
SNICKERS - "Party"		snickers, entertainment	25
Gabe Newell on Valve Game development Features by Develop		business, game, productivity, interview, management	29
HooSuite Releases Social Media Measurement White Paper		analytics, media, socialmedia, measurement, metrics	600
BeerCamp at SXSW 2011		Twitter, design, html, html5, inspiration	6
Social-networking sites face new privacy battle	16 MAY 11	privacy, law, social_networking, Social_Media, lawsuit	3
Yes We Ban! — Turks Protest Internet Censorship - Emerging ...		internet, censorship, turkey, elections, protests	3

Figure 14.5 *Delicious.com, a bookmarking service.*

Digg (www.digg.com) and **Reddit** (www.reddit.com) are sites where users submit content which other users can then vote on. Popularity, based on votes, moves the submitted content up and down lists which are available on these sites. Submitting and voting requires registration, but there are many, many people who visit these sites to get an overview of content that is “hot”. In fact, in early 2011, Digg was at 135 in the Alexa rankings, with Reddit just behind at 139.

note

Alexa is a service that ranks the popularity of websites. It is based on the Internet habits of users of the Alexa toolbar as well as the Quirk SearchStatus Firefox extension, so these rankings are based on a percentage of the global Internet population.



Figure 14.6 *Reddit.com, a social aggregator.*

Appearing on the top of these lists generates a huge increase in traffic for the content sites, so much so that servers can crash if the leap in visitors is unexpected. Getting into the top listings is a prize eyed by many a marketer, but any attempt to manipulate listings usually backfires and can generate plenty of community backlash.

The communities around these sites differ demographically, and this is reflected in the content. For example, Digg has been technology focused, while Reddit tends to feature more general news.

Stumbleupon (www.stumbleupon.com) allows you to explore the web through your interests, based on how other web users tag content. Users select categories of interest and bookmark URLs to those categories. You can then choose to “stumble” through the web using the category of your choice. The service will randomly show you a website that has been submitted to that category.

Stumbleupon allows users to explore the web based on the taxonomy applied by other users. Instead of looking to search engines for relevance, users are instead appealing to the knowledge of a community.

note

Some Internet commentators refer to this taxonomy as a folksonomy – a way of categorising content that the community creates, as opposed to a central body.

The screenshot shows the StumbleUpon website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Discover', 'Favorites', and 'Stumblers'. Below this, a 'Stumble >' button is highlighted. The main content area is titled 'The StumbleUpon Community' and includes a brief introduction: 'Meet some of our most active and helpful members. To become a Top Stumbler, simply use the toolbar on a regular basis, clicking I-like-it at any page other members would like to stumble upon.' Below this is a grid of 15 user profiles, each with a small profile picture, a name, and a 'Favs' count. For example, 'starsp...' has 316K Favs, 'ardycake' has 20K Favs, and 'laryan...' has 5,655 Favs. On the right side, there's a 'Find friends' section with a search box and a 'Find friends >' button. Below that is a 'Search for a stumbler' section with a search input field and a magnifying glass icon. At the bottom of the page, there are four columns of links: 'About StumbleUpon' (About Us, Take a Tour, Our Recommendation Engine, Press Information, Official Blog, Paid Discovery Blog), 'Explore StumbleUpon' (Tags, Books, Music, Movies, TV Shows, Cities, Countries), 'Community' (Recent Stumblers, Top Stumblers), 'Tools and Services' (Mobile, Add-ons and Bookmarks, Paid Discovery, Stumble Badges, StumbleThru, Su pr), and 'Help' (Help Center, Contact Us, Company, Jobs at StumbleUpon, Management).

Figure 14.7 Stumbleupon is another approach to a social aggregator.

Bookmarking and aggregating as marketing tools

Seeing how users categorise your content will give you an idea of how your website and company are perceived by your audience. It might be remarkably different to what you think they see you as. Look at what other websites are tagged similarly. You might find new competitors, and possibly new ideas.

You can also use these services to share what other URLs your company finds interesting. This can be a useful resource to add to an online press room, as well as a utility that fanatics of your company would get really excited about.

To create link love and traffic, investigate what sort of content your target audience loves voting for, and go about creating that content. A word of warning: never do the content submission and voting yourself. It's one sure-fire way to incur the wrath of these communities.

Organic growth is the only way to go here. It might take time as you build your reputation and worth amongst the community, but the end result can be very worthwhile.

As a content provider, make sure you have the appropriate chiclet added to your content to make it easier to share.



Figure 14.8 Chiclets can be standard, like on www.gottaquirk.com above, or can be adapted.

14.4.2 Content Sharing

YouTube may be the first content sharing site that comes to mind, but users share images, audio and information as well as video. If it can be created, it can be shared. There are many sites that facilitate the sharing of videos, images and audio, and they are exceptionally popular. From Flickr to YouTube, they have all tapped into the fact that we love to create content for others to view.

The key word here is free: there are no fees for joining, whether you are uploading content or viewing content (although premium paid for memberships can allow you further features). This means that these sites attract an enormous audience. In fact, according to Alexa rankings, YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world!

Many of these services also encourage distribution of their content. YouTube allows videos to be embedded easily into other websites, and Flickr has generated a number of applications and widgets that allow the images to be shown all over the web (and even printed onto cards and stickers via www.moo.com).

Most of these websites rely on advertising to support the free services they offer. Some do, however, have a premium paid-for- membership version which is advert free.

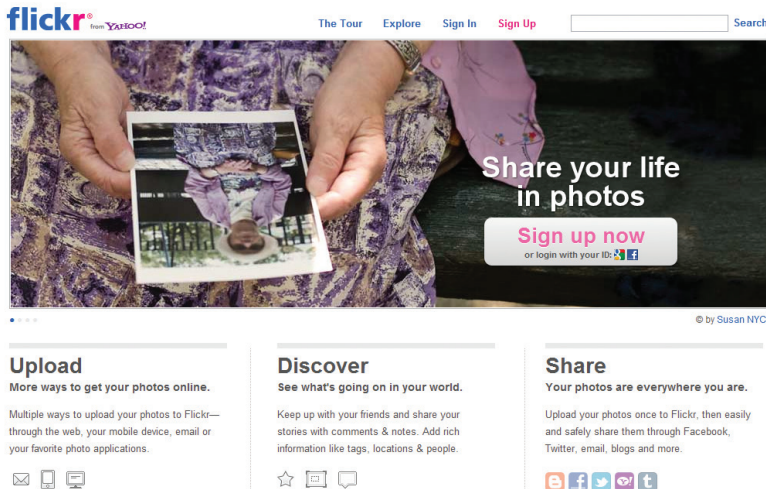


Figure 14.9 Flickr.com, a photo sharing network.

Video sharing

Online video consumption continues to grow year on year as bandwidth gets faster and cheaper. Sharing video content is easy with social video sites such as YouTube. Anyone can upload videos captured on devices from webcams and mobile phones, to high end, professional productions.

There are several video sharing platforms. Some of the most popular include YouTube (www.youtube.com) MetaCafe (www.metacafe.com) and Viddler (www.viddler.com).

note

A vlog is a video blog.

YouTube has 60% of all online video viewers with up to 2 billion viewers in an evening and over 138 240 videos uploaded every day (YouTube, 2011). This makes it both the premier online video site and social video sharing site online. This implies that most video consumption on the web is already based on social media, and that there are over 4.67 billion online viewers of video overall (YouTube, 2011). YouTube was acquired by Google in 2006 for \$1.65 billion.

YouTube is a complex site offering numerous features, yet it is simple to use.

While it is possible for unregistered users to watch most of the publicly available videos, a quick, straightforward registration process allows members to upload an unlimited number of clips, comment on and add video responses to them and subscribe to content feeds that catch their attention and interest. Frequently enhanced functionality and clever features on YouTube continually push the site to deliver bigger and better services to its ever-increasing user base.

YouTube and Marketing

There are two aspects to marketing through YouTube: promotion of content through YouTube; and advertising next to content on YouTube.

The screenshot shows the YouTube interface for a video titled "Swagger Wagon" by the channel "SIENNA MINIVAN". The video player is the central focus, showing a woman in a checkered shirt. The channel name "SIENNA MINIVAN" is visible above the video, along with a "Subscribe" button and navigation options like "Uploads", "Favorites", and "Playlists". The video title "Swagger Wagon" is displayed below the video frame, along with a description: "The Sienna Family feat. The Sienna SE Dir: Jody Hill Black Iris Music". The video player controls show a progress bar at 0:02 / 2:36 and a resolution of 360p. To the right of the video player, there is a "Back to Playlists" section for "Toyota Sienna" and a "More Info" section. Below these, a list of related videos is shown, including "SWAGGER WAGON" (9,035,692 views), "Meet The Parents" (1,574,504 views), "Car Wash Commercial" (90,463 views), and "Daddy Like Help" (446,921 views).

Figure 14.10 Content promotion through YouTube can be a powerful tool.

YouTube offers Brand Channels. Brands can customise their own channel on YouTube, from backgrounds and logos, through to playlists and additional community features. Some notable brand channels include www.youtube.com/Sienna, created to promote Toyota's Sienna Minivan. Organisations and brands can further promote their own content on YouTube using YouTube's Promote Your Video.

With 48 hours of video uploaded every minute, and tens of millions of video views each day, YouTube presents an advertising opportunity to marketers. Through Google AdWords, adverts can be placed on YouTube videos.

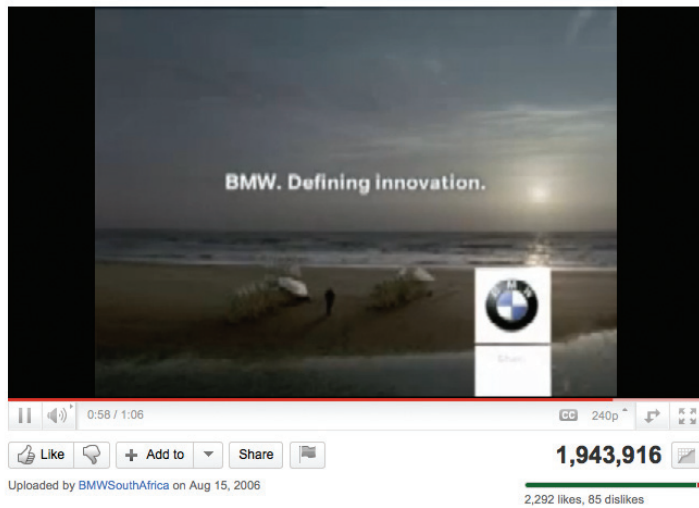


Figure 14.11 BMW South Africa's YouTube success.

Using social services such as YouTube allows video creators to tap into an existing community of avid video viewers. For example, YouTube has changed the way we view video commercials. Marketers such as BMW have shown that if an advert is good enough, many people will choose to watch it. BMW has created a BMW South Africa channel on YouTube (www.youtube.com/BMWSouthAfrica), and have uploaded many of their adverts. One of them has been viewed close to two million times. These are people who have chosen to watch this advert at a media cost of zero! Other advertisers have realised that far longer adverts can be created and uploaded. As long as the content is good, there will be viewers. Time constraints are not the same as they are for television networks.

Savvy marketers also realise the potential of watching for organic mentions of their brand, and then capitalising on this. An unknown teenage girl, with the YouTube account name Bowiechick, made a 75 second video clip about her break-up with a boyfriend. While making the clip she played with some of the effects on her new webcam, like putting ears on her head and a moustache

on her face with its facial tracking software. Three days after uploading the video, 178,000 people had seen this video and 900 had commented on it. The comments had nothing to do with the break up but rather with the Logitech webcam she had used in the video. Following this, the camera broke into Amazon's Top 100 bestselling products list. Logitech were obviously listening and made the most of the opportunity by becoming YouTube's official partner (Sandoval 2006).

Online video sharing also makes it possible for conferences to generate a far greater audience than ever before. The companies that sponsor or run these conferences are able to engage with a larger audience by making freely available videos of the various sessions held. TED (www.ted.com) and Nokia's Nokia World are excellent examples of organisations that increase interest by making their remarkable presentations available for free.

Knowledge sharing – the wiki

Howard G. "Ward" Cunningham, pioneer of the wiki, began programming the WikiWikiWeb software in 1994 and installed it on the website of his software consultancy in 1995. Back then he described a wiki as "The simplest online database that could possibly work." 13 years later this is probably still the most accurate description.

Essentially, a wiki is a piece of software which users can create and edit online, using simple mark-up language via a web browser. They support hyperlinks and have a simple text syntax for creating new pages and links between internal pages. In its most basic form, a wiki is a website that supports user collaboration through a variety of functions.

There are numerous types of wiki software available that share the following characteristics:

- **Create and update documents:** Wiki users have the ability to create and update documents easily.
- **Review versions:** Most wikis store each version of a document. This functionality makes it easy for users to view the various modifications that a document has undergone over time.
- **Community-oriented tools:** Most wikis provide users with an ability to engage in some form of discussion about the documents on which they are collaborating.

Wikis can be open to all, such as Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) and Wikitravel (www.wikitravel.org); they can be open to or aimed at certain communities only, such as Geek Dinner attendees (geekdinner.pbwiki.com); or they can be private and open only to individuals within an organisation. Internal wikis are exceptionally useful for creating knowledge bases within organisations and companies.

note

"Wiki wiki" means "rapidly" in the Hawaiian language.

note

If you'd like to try out setting up your own wiki, www.pbwiki.com provides free wikis and has a host of features.

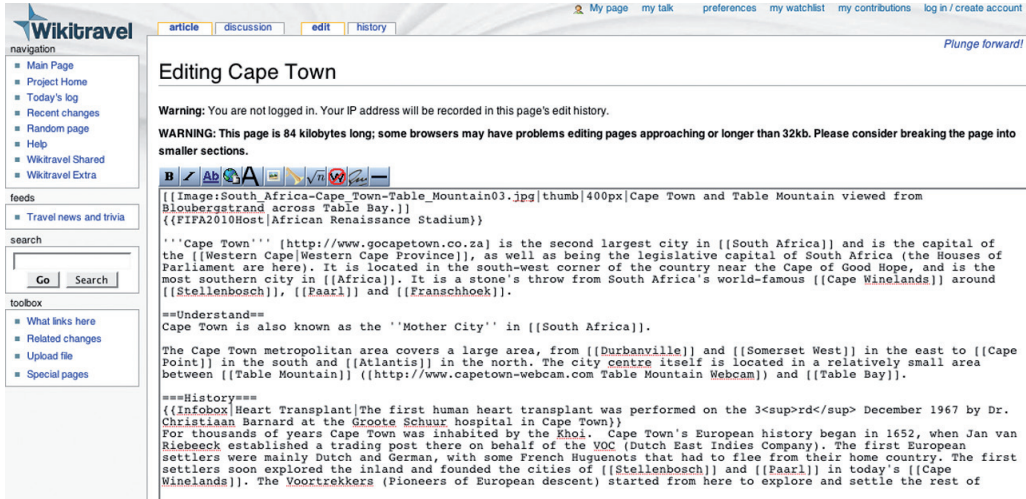


Figure 14.12 A wiki can be edited by anyone who can access it!

Wikipedia: the most famous wiki of all

Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) is a free, web-based, content encyclopaedia rated one of the top ten visited sites in the world. Originally created in 2001 by James Wales and Larry Sanger, this online encyclopaedia has received both praise and criticism. Roughly 15 times the size of Encyclopaedia Britannica, with more than nine million articles in over 250 languages, this encyclopaedia is increasing in size at an exponential rate (Wikipedia: About). However, with the increased adoption of this tool, criticism has also increased as to the validity of the definitions.

All definitions seen on Wikipedia are written by a collaborative team of volunteers from around the world. Anyone can submit a definition and these can then be edited by anyone who has access to the Internet. This combination of contributors leads to a democratic way of including the most up-to-date information. Since definitions are reviewed frequently, it should decrease the amount of bias and inaccuracy, while building a unique social network with people of similar interests contributing.

Companies should also take note of what is being written about them on Wikipedia, and make transparent efforts to correct information.

Blogging

A blog is a website where entries (blog posts) are typically displayed in reverse chronological order. Technorati, a blog and social media tracking engine, defines a blog as a “regularly updated journal published on the web.” Blogs usually allow for comments on blog posts. A typical blog will feature text, images and links to other blogs and websites related to the topic of the blog.

Blogs range from the personal to the political and everything in between. They can be written by one person or by a group of people. Some are aimed at the blogger's immediate family and friends, and others rival leading newspapers in terms of reach and readership. Blogs are mostly textual, but can comprise solely of images, videos, audio or a combination of any of these.

The image shows the homepage of Technorati.com, a popular blog aggregator. At the top, there is a banner for '360degrees of Financial Literacy' with a photo of four people. Below this is the Technorati logo and a search bar. The navigation menu includes categories like Women, Technology, Business, Entertainment, Lifestyle, Sports, Politics, Videos, and Blogging. The main content area is titled 'Today on Technorati' and features several featured posts with images and titles, such as 'Obama Pulls a Disappearing Act From the Press', 'How Amazon Came to Dominate Online Commerce', and 'Microsoft to Students: Buy a PC, Get a Free Xbox 360'. There are also advertisements and a 'Recently Updated Features' section on the right side.

Figure 14.13 Technorati.com, a blog aggregator.

According to Technorati data, there are over 175 000 new blogs created and over 1.6 million posts updated every day (over 18 updates a second). That's a lot.

The power of blogs is that they allow anyone to publish and share ideas, and anyone can read and respond to these. They have given consumers and companies a voice and blogging has opened up a world of information sharing possibilities.

The basic elements of a blog post are:

- **Author** : the person who wrote the blog post.
- **Blog post title** : the title of the blog post, which is usually used to create a unique URL, or permalink, for the blog post.
- **Tag** : tags are the categories used to describe the blog post, and aid services such as Technorati in categorising blog posts.
- **Comment** : comments left by readers of the blog are shown with the blog post.
- **TrackBack** : a notification of other blogs linking to a post, often displayed below blog post.

note

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and allows for information to be syndicated, well, simply. It means that instead of you visiting various websites for updates and information, information is packaged and sent to your RSS reader. Information is supplied by websites in a standard feed format, and your RSS reader knows how to turn that into something that makes sense to you. As soon as an RSS feed is updated, i.e. new information is added, it appears in your RSS reader.

RSS readers can be integrated with an email client, can work offline or can be online only. Some are free, and some are not. Look at your email client to see if you can set one up there, or try www.bloglines.com, www.google.com/reader or www.feeddemon.com. Find the one with the features that suit your needs.

RSS readers are a useful way to keep up to date with blogs as well, as most supply an RSS feed of their posts. Still confused? Take a look at www.commoncraft.com/firefox/rank-checker/.

Some other elements of a blog include:

- **RSS feed** : an RSS feed allows for readers to subscribe easily to the blog
- **Categories** : blog posts can be allocated categories
- **Blogroll** : a collection of links to other blogs or websites commonly read or used by the blogger
- **Archives** : previous posts remain available for visitors to search through. Archives are usually categorised by date

Whether blogging as an individual or a company, there is plenty to be gained from the process. You can:

- Create an online identity
- Create a voice for yourself or your company
- Promote engagement with your audience
- Create a community

Blogging and SEO

Search engines value regular, fresh content, and by blogging you can create just that. The more you post, the more often search engines will spider your site, looking for additional, relevant content. Basing your blog on the keyword strategy created during the SEO process can also ensure that your website ranks for those key phrases. Blogs, by their social nature, can also increase the incoming links to your website.

Using a blog platform designed to be search engine friendly is crucial to harnessing the SEO power of blogging. Some features of SEO-friendly blogging software include:

- Each blog post should be assigned a unique page which can be easily accessed and indexed by the search engines. This is called a permalink
- It should be possible to tag pages with keywords relevant to your SEO strategy
- Each post should be enabled to have its own unique metadata (title, description and key phrases)
- Social bookmarking functionality should be built in

Corporate blogging

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They're an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand, and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback on developments. This is an audience made up of players key to the success of a company: that makes it important to get blogging right.

Generally the tasks that a blogger undertakes include:

- Writing posts
- Replying to comments from readers
- Monitoring other blogs within the industry
- Keeping up to date with the latest industry news
- Building relationships with other bloggers in the community
- Commenting on other blogs

For corporate blogs, it is important to outline a strategy and establish guidelines before starting a blog, especially as there will most likely be a number of contributors. Transparency and honesty are important, but companies should also be aware of sensitive information being blogged. If there are “no go” areas they need to be clearly defined to the parties involved. While certain topics can be restricted, ultimately the bloggers should be granted the freedom to express both negative and positive points of view about the approved topics.

Positive claims are more believable if the blogger is able to express negative views as well. For example, Robert Scoble in his popular blog www.scobleizer.com admitted that the Firefox browser was better than Microsoft’s Internet Explorer. Robert Scoble was an employee of Microsoft at the time. This honesty gave him a credible voice, and so his positive views on Microsoft are respected by the community.

Corporate blog content should be:

- Industry relevant
- Appealing to your target market
- Transparent and honest
- Personal and entertaining
- Related to what’s going on in the blogosphere
- Posted regularly

Promoting blogs

While Technorati may be tracking 112.8 million blogs it doesn’t mean that all of these blogs will still be active by the end of the year - in fact only 55% of blogs make it past the first three months (Sifry 2006). Longevity rests in the hands of the blogger, but here are some tips to raise the profile of a blog:

- **List the blog in blog directories:** while they’re not as popular as search engines many Internet users do in fact visit them while looking for information. Examples include: Google’s Directory (www.google.com/dirhp) and BlogCatalog (www.blogcatalog.com).
- **Ping web services with updated content:** sites like Ping-o-Matic (pingomatic.com) and Feed Shark (feedshark.brainbliss.com) offer a service whereby they ping multiple web services, blog directories and search engines to let them know that a blog has fresh content.

- **Use TrackBacks:** If a blogger writes a new entry commenting on, or referring to, an entry on your blog, and both blogging tools support the TrackBack protocol, then the commenting blogger can notify your blog with a “TrackBack ping”. The receiving blog will typically display summaries of, and links to, all the commenting entries below the original entry. This allows for conversations spanning several blogs that readers can easily follow.
- **Participate in the blogosphere:** You can’t expect anyone to engage on your blog if you’re not engaging on theirs. It’s all about fostering a sense of community.
- **Make use of aggregators:** Examples of aggregators include Technorati and Atomu.

Blogs as a marketing tool: listen and engage

Blogs are powerful because of their reach, their archives (information is seldom deleted and is thus available long after it has been posted) and the trust that other consumers place in them. For a marketer, they present opportunities to learn how others perceive your brand and to engage with your audience. Some brands get this right; some get it wrong.

Above are some guidelines for corporate blogging, but marketers do not need to be bloggers to use this tool. As with all other social media, blogs provide a snapshot of audience sentiment regarding a brand. Marketers can also listen to blog activity around competitors to gain market insights.

Although blogging is the best way to engage with bloggers, companies can also interact with bloggers by commenting on relevant posts. Demonstrating the capacity to listen to bloggers and then respond using the same medium can reap tremendous benefits with this community.

Blogging platforms that can be used to set up a blog quickly and easily include:

- WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
- Tumblr (www.tumblr.com)
- Posterous (www.posterous.com)
- Blogger (www.blogspot.com)

Microblogging

Microblogging is a form of blogging that allows a user to publish short text updates, usually limited to 140 characters which can be viewed by anyone or restricted to a community as specified by the microblogger. This can be accomplished using various communication tools such as instant messaging (IM), via the web, text messaging on your mobile phone, even a Facebook application. The most popular microblogging service is Twitter (www.twitter.com), which was launched in July 2006. These posts are usually short thoughts

or URLs to interesting articles. On Twitter, posts are called tweets and are limited to 140 characters. Despite frequent disruptions to Twitter's service, its users are fiercely loyal. As of June 2011, Twitter has more than 200 million members, with 200 million Tweets being written each day.

Figure 14.14 Profiles on Twitter can be branded to represent your organisation's identity.

Twitter users are denoted with @ and their username (e.g. @robstokes for www.twitter.com/robstokes).

Posts broadcast on Twitter are referred to as tweets. These can be directed at a user by including @username in the tweet. Tweets can be tagged using hashtags (such as #measure). You can click on hashtags, or use them for search, to access all tweets that have been tagged with that hashtag. You can also choose to follow a hashtag, meaning that you will see all public messages with that tag, whether you follow the user or not.

This can be a very useful way to collate information at events such as conferences. If you're not at the event, you can still follow messages from the event by following the hashtag. For those at the event, all tagged messages can be broadcast in a shared location. High volume use of tags results in those topics trending – meaning that the tag is highlighted in various ways by Twitter.

Twitter has proved immensely valuable in breaking events, where realtime information is useful and powerful. For example, when US Airways Flight 1549 landed in the Hudson River in New York after striking a flock of geese, it was tweets that broke the news, and supplied the first images of the scene.

note

You can follow Quirk on Twitter:

www.twitter.com/quirkagency or
www.twitter.com/quirkeducation or
www.twitter.com/quirklabs.

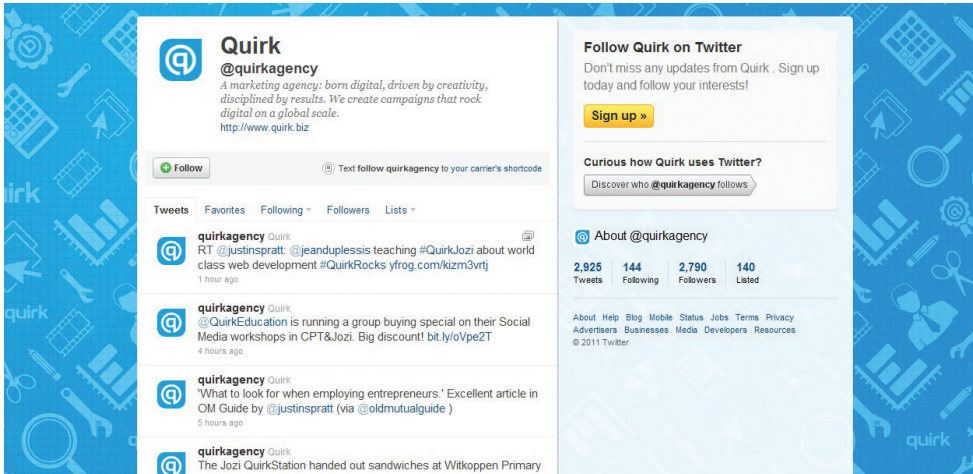


Figure 14.15 A Twitter feed, appearing at www.twitter.com/quirkagency.

Twitter as a marketing tool

Twitter has become a popular and important marketing tool for many organisations, brands and individuals. Many brands use it successfully for rapid customer service (for example @comcast, @klm and @mwebguy).

Its immediacy allows for news to be broadcast to dedicated followers and fans first, as popstar Lady Gaga has done with single releases (@ladygaga).

Dell lists several Twitter channels (www.dell.com/twitter), many of which exclusively release offer information (@delloutlet).

Twitter has released some advertising opportunities on Twitter with Promoted Tweets and Promoted Trends, but at the time of writing does not have a self-service advertising option.

Podcasting

A podcast is a digital radio (or video) programme downloadable from the Internet. Podcasting started to take off around 2004 and it zoomed from 'geekdom' to mainstream so quickly that 'podcast' was voted 2005 'word of the year' by the editors of the New Oxford American dictionary. Podcasts started as audio blogs. People then figured out a way of distributing them using the same RSS feeds used to distribute blog post information. It was then possible to subscribe to a podcast as one would a blog. Suddenly you could listen to a whole range of programmes and voices whenever and wherever you wanted to. It was radio without a station telling what you could hear and when. Plus, just as blogs have allowed people to become writers without having to deal with a media channel controlled by someone else, podcasting has allowed anyone who fancies it to become a broadcaster.

With the right kind of 'podcatching' software on your computer the latest edition of any podcast you subscribe to is automatically downloaded every time you log on. Most people use iTunes. Go to <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/> for loads more information on podcasting and a huge list of available podcasts. You can listen on your computer or transfer the file to an iPod or any other kind of MP3 player. You don't have to have an iPod to listen, the name came from the fact that the iPod was taking off at the same time and the 'pod' (play on demand) part fitted this new medium. Podcasts are usually free.

Creating a podcast

Podcasts are usually recorded and edited using home equipment and done for the love of it. There is specialised podcasting software available like Apple's Garage Band or Quicktime Pro. These packages make it quite simple to record, mix and format the audio files correctly. Just like bloggers, though, many podcasters are trying to figure out ways of making money from their podcasts and turn listeners into revenue.

Podcasts as a marketing tool

Podcasts offer an incredible opportunity for marketers. The bottom line is that you now have a way of getting content to your target markets without having to persuade a media channel to carry it or to pay huge advertising rates.

Podcasts are:

- **Targetable:** you can create highly relevant, niche content and then promote it to a specific target market.
- **Measurable:** you can see exactly how many downloads and subscribers you have.
- **Controllable:** it's your content.
- **Responsive:** set up a blog alongside your podcast and alter content according to the comments, you are actually having a conversation with your market.
- **Boundary free:** it's the Internet.
- **Relatively inexpensive.**

However, the content must be:

- **Excellent quality:** like anything on the Internet, it is just as easy to unsubscribe as it is to subscribe. Quality content is what keeps listeners coming back.
- **Real:** while there is value in having product or service information embedded in a website, there is no point at all in producing an audio version of a company brochure as a regular podcast. Consumers are losing faith in the content of traditional media. Even if editorial is not actually paid for, a lot of the time it has been influenced in some way by advertisers. Although there are podcasts that carry adverts, people can fast forward straight past them and the chance of real success lies in branded content.

This is not about advertising or even just product information. It is about coming up with ideas for real programmes that, through informing or entertaining, enhance your customers' experience of your brand.

14.4.3 Social Networking - Connecting




Social networking refers to the forming and substantiating of online social networks for communities of people. The communities are people who share interests and activities, or are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. And to complete the definition of online social networking: the building of these social networks requires the use of software.

Social networking is all about using the tools of the Internet to connect and build relationships with others. Social networking sites such as Facebook (www.facebook.com), MySpace (www.myspace.com) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) allow users to create personal profiles and then interact with their connections through sharing media, sending messages and blogging. Not only do social networking sites allow you to interact with the members of your own virtual Rolodex, but they allow you to extend beyond your personal network. In addition, organisations such as businesses, bands, charities, etc can also create and maintain profiles on many of these networks.



Home What is LinkedIn? Join Today Sign In

Get the most from your professional network

<p>Re-connect</p>  <p>Find past and present colleagues and classmates quickly. LinkedIn makes staying in touch simple.</p>	<p>Power your career</p>  <p>Discover inside connections when you're looking for a job or new business opportunity.</p>	<p>Get answers</p>  <p>Your network is full of industry experts willing to share advice. Have a question? Just ask.</p>
---	--	--

Ready to get started? [Join now](#)

Figure 14.16 LinkedIn.com, a professional social network.

Social networks have created new meaning for the term “friend” with many connections existing solely online. In the realm of social networking, it is unnecessary to have met someone in order to connect with them.

Personal profile pages remove much of the anonymity of the Internet. Users of social networks reveal a great deal of information about themselves, from basic demographics such as age, gender and location, to nuanced and detailed lists of likes and dislikes. Although explicitly made known to a user's connections, users are also divulging this information to the networks, and hence to the networks' advertisers. Users tend not to be aware of the data that is amassing regarding their online profile.

Social networks can be general, such as Facebook, or niche, such as LinkedIn or Dopplr (www.dopplr.com). LinkedIn is a network for professionals. Members connect to others that they know professionally and are able to recommend members that they have worked with. Dopplr is a social network for frequent travellers. Members can share their trips, and make plans to meet up when schedules overlap.

There are social networking platforms that allow anyone to build their own social network using the underlying technology of the platform. Two popular platforms are Ning (www.ning.com) and Motribe (www.motribe.com). Motribe focuses on building mobile social networks.

Facebook – 600 million friends and counting

Facebook has become the most dominant personal social network in the world. According to figures that Facebook releases, 600 million users have returned to the site in the last 30 days. Because people are spending so much time, so frequently on Facebook, naturally advertisers and organisers would like to capitalise on that audience.

Facebook, over the past few years, has launched a number of ways for brands and organisations to use the social network to connect with potential customers.

Pages and Tabs

A Page is profile for a brand, organisation or celebrity. It looks very similar to a personal profile, and in the same way that two people can add each other as friends on Facebook, people can choose to connect with a brand on Facebook by liking its Page.

There is some required information for each Page: a profile image, some "About" information which can include links, the Wall and more detailed information which is housed in a tab called "Info". Tabs are distinct pages of information on the brand's Page. The Wall is where posts by the brand and posts and comments from users appear. This is the same as the Wall on a personal profile.

Tabs can be used to house richer, more graphic content. Information in the tabs can be served through an application or through an iFrame, allowing for interactions within them.

note

In 2007, Facebook launched Beacon, a service that shared a person's online purchases activities on select websites with their list of Facebook friends, and with Facebook. This caused an outcry, as Facebook users did not want to have freely available the list of purchases they had made. Facebook quickly amended the way Beacon works, but the fact remains that they are able to collect this data about their users.

discussion

How is someone's Facebook profile likely to differ from their LinkedIn profile?



Figure 14.17 Savanna Facebook page showing Tabs and the Wall.

Applications

Applications are developed by third parties to be used by users on Facebook. Applications include games such as Farmville (www.facebook.com/farmville), contests, virtual gifting, photo uploaders and more.



Figure 14.18 FarmVille is an example of a very popular Facebook application.

Branded applications are a way for organisations to create branded experiences for their Facebook fans. Viral sharing can be built right into the application, exposing the application to the user's friends, and making it easier for the user to invite friends to add the application as well.

Facebook makes frequent updates that might affect applications, so they've made several developer resources available. The one to watch is the Developer Roadmap (<http://developers.facebook.com/roadmap>).

Promotions and Competitions

Promotions and competitions can be run by brands through their Facebook page, but must use an application that has been authorised by Facebook to do so, and ensure that they comply with Facebook's terms and conditions. Wildfire (www.wildfireapp.com) is an application that can be used to run promotions on Facebook.

Engagement Ads and Ad Space Units (ASUs)

Facebook offers two types of advertising: Engagement Ads and ASUs. Engagement ads need to be booked through a media partner, and come with a minimum spend of several thousand US dollars. These are the larger, interactive adverts which appear on the News Feed – the page that users see when they log into Facebook. Engagement Ads include video adverts, polls, virtual gifting and more. ASUs are the smaller simpler adverts that are usually on the right hand side of the page. These can be self-managed and are bought on an auction basis. Adverts can be used to drive users to a Facebook Page, Application or to external websites. Adverts can show who in the users social circle has interacted with the advert.

Facebook Connect

Facebook Connect allows users to log into services external to Facebook using their Facebook login details. They can then grant permission to have information, such as photos, shared between Facebook and the service they have logged into. This can make it easier for users to log into new services without having to create new usernames and passwords. They can also easily see who else in their social circle might use that service, and share information back to their social circle.

Like Button

The Facebook Like button allows users to indicate that they like or recommend content, images, media or websites, and to share that recommendation with their social circle. The Like button can be used by any website, allowing visitors to recommend their site and content easily, and to see who of their friends might like the same content.

While you can Like a web page, you can +1 a result on a SERP as well as website content. This means giving it the thumbs up as well as sharing it with your network of contacts via your personal profile. This will improve the content's ranking since it is viewed as a form of endorsement, thus reflecting that the link is relevant.

News Feed

The News Feed is the information users see when they login to Facebook. It's a selection of recent posts and updates from their friends, and from the brands that they have connected with on Facebook. Facebook uses an algorithm to determine what information to show in the News Feed.

For a brand with a Page, the ideal is for posts, stories and comments to appear in a user's News Feed. The user is more likely to interact with content in the feed, or to follow through to the page, than if there was nothing to prompt them.

note

Just because it's a social network doesn't mean it's the right place for every company to be marketing.

First, determine if your target market is using the social network, and next determine if it is the right place to be marketing to them.

Social Networking as a Tool for Marketers

Social networks, free for their members, tend to rely on advertising for their revenue. Because of demographic information collected by the social networks, advertisers are able to target their adverts to a particular audience.

Most social networks offer opportunities for brands to create a presence on the social network, and to make use of the existing social network to connect with and reach out to customers.

Google+

At the time of going to print, Google had just introduced its own social networking platform called Google+. This new social network represents Google's answer to social networking giant, Facebook and was launched in June 2011, after being in development for a year under the leadership of Google's Senior Vice President of Social, Vic Gundotra.

Google+ has introduced new seamless ways to interact through bespoke features such as Circles, Sparks, Huddle and Hangouts.

Through HTML5 , Circles allows users to target their sharing with customised groups (friends, family, classmates etc.). These circles are created through a simple drag and drop process. By using Circles, users are able to limit sharing by breaking up their network into distinct clusters of contacts.

Sparks then acts as an aggregator, finding elements on the web that the user might find interesting, based on the interests they've entered.

Real-time communication is available through Huddle, a group messaging system, and Hangouts – where users can enter video chat rooms and let others know that they're interested in chatting. If users are already chatting within a circle, other circle members will be notified and can join in.

Google+ began testing with a limited field on 28 June 2011 and it is yet to be seen whether social media users will migrate from existing tried and tested networks such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to this new social networking tool.

14.4.4 Location and Social Media

Foursquare, Gowalla and Facebook Places

Social media has also seen the introduction of location services such as Foursquare (<https://foursquare.com/>), Gowalla (<http://gowalla.com/>) and Facebook Places (<http://www.facebook.com/places/>). These services allow users to 'check in' at locations they visit via mobile devices such as mobile phones and tablets like the Apple iPad.

By 'checking in', users are able to share their location with their friends and find others that are checked in as well. They can add reviews about their location and some sites like Gowalla also allow users to upload photos of the locations they are checked into. Foursquare offers users the opportunity of becoming 'mayors' of locations when they have visited those particular locations more than anyone else.

These location services appeal to marketers for a number of reasons since marketers can obtain, engage with and retain customers by leveraging them. For instance, if people see their friends checking in at certain places, they are more likely to want to go there, particularly if their friend posted a positive review of the location.

These services also offer rewards and special deals to users who have checked in, incentivising them to return as well as to share the location with their friends. An example is when Starbucks in the US used Foursquare to offer all mayors of Starbucks stores a one dollar Frappuchino coupon at any branch.

14.5 tracking social media campaigns

As with anything digital marketing, you need to be able to track and measure your campaigns in order to understand how successful they are, and what you can do to improve them.

With most social networking channels, you do not actually host your presence, which means that custom tracking is limited. For the most part, there is a strong reliance on the tracking offered by the various channels. However, in some cases, it is possible to integrate tracking to some extent if you are directing traffic to a web property that you own and host.

Facebook Insights

Facebook Insights is available to page administrators, and provide data on how people are interacting with your content and your page. Information includes demographic information about the people connecting with your content (age, gender and location breakdown), data that shows which tabs and which content posts are seen and interacted with, and data that shows how many and when people might hide your content from their News Feed. There is also data that shows how people got to your page.

YouTube Insight

YouTube insight is available to all YouTube users for their videos and channels. As well as showing video views and popularity broken by geographical territory, there is some demographic information shown as well. Discovery data shows how people got to your video.

One of the most useful reports for any video is audience attention, showing when people stop viewing a video, or rewind sections of video, and comparing this to videos of a similar kind.

Twitter Analytics

Currently, Twitter Analytics is only available to Twitter advertisers, but there are a number of tools that use the Twitter API to provide analysis. HootSuite's Twitter management tools have built in analytics (www.hootsuite.com), and Twitalyzer (www.twitalyzer.com) is another tool that can provide analytics.

Important metrics for Twitter include how many people interact with your content by clicking through on links or retweeting messages.

Click Tracking With URL Shorteners

When you are sharing links on services like Twitter, you should be tracking to see how many people actually click on the links that you share. URL shorteners offer analytics that show how many people are clicking on links, when they are clicking on them, and where in the world they are.

URL shortening services provide an easy way to share long links by providing a short URL that redirects to the original link. This is especially important when sharing links in messages with limited character counts, such as Tweets.

There are several URL shortening services: bit.ly, goo.gl, ow.ly. When selecting which URL shortener to use, consider whether or not they keep the click analytics private or not.

For example, we might want to Tweet a link to a blog post on GottaQuirk, Quirk's blog.

The URL to a post might be:

<http://www.gottaquirk.com/2011/02/08/the-future-of-online-reputation-management-software/>

That's 89 characters!

Using goo.gl, a URL shortening service, the link becomes:

<http://goo.gl/wQXM0>

It's now just 19 characters, and can be tracked.

14.6 web analytics

Web analytics software like Google Analytics still play a part in social media tracking. With Facebook applications and tabs, tracking script can be inserted in pages where content is served through an iFrame. When you are sharing links to your own site and content, campaign tracking parameters can be used to track the source of visit and report on it in your web analytics tool.

For example, for the link demonstrated above, we might use campaign tracking before we shorten the URL, so the URL before shortening becomes:

http://www.gottaquirk.com/2011/02/08/the-future-of-online-reputation-management-software/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=ORM

The campaign tracking is appended on the end of the URL:

[?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=ORM](http://www.gottaquirk.com/2011/02/08/the-future-of-online-reputation-management-software/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=ORM)

14.6.1 Social Media and Marketing: Rules of Engagement

Social media implies a democratisation of information, and requires authenticity and openness from those who would deliberately use it for marketing. Relying on the connected Internet, it means that good stories as well as bad stories spread and stick around. Jeff Jarvis may have had problems with Dell in 2005, but you can easily find all relevant communication with a quick Google search.

Although engaging publically with a wide audience, marketers need to remember that they are communicating with individuals. While marketers should engage in the conversation, and possibly lead it, they cannot control it.

Marketing to content creators

The influence of bloggers means that they should form a part of any PR strategy (see the *WebPR* chapter for further details).

Supply content creators with the tools and resources so that they can easily talk about your product.

Marketing to content consumers

Social media allows anyone to have a say, and the same tools that are available to individuals are available to companies. Company blogs allow a brand to build a personality and to interact with their target market. Entertainment created and spread via social media increases brand touch points. Using the same channels that are available to your consumer aids in understanding the consumer, and evens the plane of conversation.

When using social media to reach out to content consumers, go to where your consumers are. The media used is dictated by your users.

For example, a nightclub for students can create a Facebook group to advertise its weekly specials, and interact with fans, while Land Rover enthusiasts would probably be more comfortable with a forum.

With all interactions, marketing messages need to be labelled as marketing messages, with a disclaimer added if necessary. Trying to hide them as something else will only decrease your authenticity.

Marketing to content sharers


Content sharers are content consumers who also pass your message on, whether by using chat or email, or by sharing a link on a blog or submitting your content to a bookmarking or aggregating service. They are a crucial link in the chain that passes your message around. Make it as easy as possible for sharers to share by using chiclets and unique and easy to read URLs.

Advertise on social media platforms


While marketers can use the tools of social media to convey their message, also important are characteristics that define a social media website. Social media allows users to express themselves, and this means that demographic information can be compiled to allow for more useful and targeted advertising. This presents many opportunities for targeting advertising, and for finding creative ways to reach an advert fatigued demographic.

Sponsored
Create an advert


The Dark Carnival



Fan page for all fantasy, sci-fi, comic and graphic novel fans all over South Africa - news, talk comix; win stuff! Click here to like!


 Like • 409 people like this.

Real Men Play This Game!



Join your friends in the most advanced strategy game on FB.

R54.86 Auto Insurance?
lowermyautoinsurancesite.com



Auto insurance companies are upset that R54.86 car insurance is now available to the public!

Figure 14.19 Facebook ads are often used as a form of targeted advertising.

14.6.2 The Benefits of Social Media to Marketers

- People are finding it easier to switch off or ignore traditional advertising, particularly through traditional media environments such as TV or radio. Social media gives brands the opportunity to **interact with customers through targeted communications** which customers can choose to engage with on their terms. For example a consumer may visit a branded YouTube channel as opposed to deliberately ignoring advert breaks on television.
- Social media's potential to **go viral** is one of its greatest benefits - if users like the content they will share it with their own communities.
- Social media allows you to **create an online community** for your brand and its supporters.
- Social media can tie in nicely with any of your other online marketing tactics - a **holistic digital marketing strategy** is always the best strategy.
- Social media allows you to engage with an online community and allows you to **connect your brand** to the appropriate audience.

- Social media has created a **forum for brand evangelists**. Companies should embrace as well as monitor this as users with negative opinions of your brand have access to the same forum.
- The various platforms allow you to **access a community** with similar interests to your own - networking without borders.
- The numerous interactions allow you to **garner feedback** from your communities.
- Feedback from social media sites helps drive both **future business** as well as marketing strategies.
- The range of media enables you to **learn more** about your audience's likes, dislikes, behaviour etc. Never before has this much information been available to marketers - market research just got a whole lot cheaper.
- **Niche targeting** just got a whole lot easier!

There are huge risks as well as opportunities. Social media facilitates a two-way conversation between customer and company. This necessitates that the company shifts approach from "deploy and watch" to one of constant involvement with the audience.

14.6.3 Social Media has Changed the Traditional Media Landscape

To keep up with their audiences, traditional media have had to adapt. This has changed the way that they publish, both online and off, as well as how they can sell advertising.

For example, many newspapers now publish their content online as well as in their print publications. Online they can allow for instant commentary on their articles. It allows an instant snapshot of what their readers think, which can then be used to make editorial decisions. Print stories can be supplemented online with video, and this has been embraced by many news organisations. Visit www.thetimes.co.za to see how one newspaper is using video online.

As mentioned, TV adverts can be placed online for free via channels such as YouTube. This opens adverts to a new audience, and allows for adverts that can be created without the restrictions of television. Adverts can be extended and now additional footage can become as important as the advert. Quality adverts are voluntarily and deliberately viewed, as opposed to deliberately ignored.

14.7 tools of the trade

As a creator of content, there are a plethora of platforms for the budding social media enthusiast. Throughout the chapter, we have listed the URLs for some of the most popular services, most of which are free.

Instead of going back through the chapter, visit <http://www.delicious.com/quirkemarketingtextbook>. Use the tags to navigate to the social media tools you need to get started.

14.8 pros and cons

Social media allows marketers insights into their demographic and the chance to engage with their audience in a channel selected, and preferred, by the audience.

It allows marketers to capitalise on the creativity of their consumers to spread their message further, often at very low costs.

Lastly, social media provide avenues for establishing direct, personal contact on a level not available to traditional marketing campaigns.

However, companies need also be aware that good messages spread as well as bad ones, and the connectedness that can prove so useful can also be a conduit for negative messages to be distributed.

This new landscape is one in which the customer really is king, and any attempt to dethrone the king can have dire consequences. Efforts to control the conversation in social media are soon found out, can backfire horribly. Any company embarking on a social media strategy needs to be sure to monitor their reputation online. It is crucial to know what is being said in order to be able to respond and communicate in the social media sphere.

14.9 summary

Social media is also known as consumer generated media and it refers to the creation and sharing of content by consumers on the Internet. It has allowed a democratisation of the Internet, where all Internet users now also have the opportunity to be creators as well as consumers of content.

Social media refers to the online technology platforms allowing users to:

- **Bookmark and aggregate content.**
- **Create and share content.**
- **Use other Internet users' preferences to find content.**

Most social media services are free to all participators and rely on advertising for revenue. Social media provides targeted demographic information to advertisers looking to direct their advertising.

14.10 the bigger picture

Social media can have SEO benefits for a website, particularly when a company engages in the various social media. By using the services of social media, either to create or share content, websites can attract links, all helping to enhance search engine rankings. Companies can also use their SEO keyword strategy to focus their social media efforts.

Social media can provide a targeted network for online advertising, allowing detailed demographic information to play a role in media planning and buying. Companies can also make use of the increased engagement of consumers to create engaging advertising for these mediums, such as advertising within videos and social network applications, or merely making use of increased time on page metrics to create more intricate advertising.

Affiliates often use the new opportunities presented by social media to find new avenues for targeted traffic, resulting in revenue growth for the company being marketed this way.

Social media plays a large role in Online Reputation Management (ORM), viral marketing and WebPR. Social media is used to express opinion, and so is the bedrock of ORM. Any company or brand hoping to communicate to this connected audience, needs to learn to listen to social media. ORM is all about the tools of listening, and using social media to guide the conversation.

chapter questions

1. Visit www.guardian.co.uk. List the ways that this print publication is embracing social media.
2. Why is transparency so important to marketing using social media? Has this halted or accelerated the use of social media for marketing?
3. What is the difference between advertising using social media and marketing using social media? What are the benefits of social media to each, and what are the challenges?

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further reading

- www.gottaquirk.com – the blog from the minds of Quirk, filled with the latest in social media and digital marketing.
- www.mashable.com – a blog that covers social networking and social media.

What's inside: This chapter is an **expansion** on the previous chapter dealing with social media, the **different ways of creating** and then **engaging with a thriving community**, and how **social media has wiggled its way** into almost **every facet** of the **online world**. We discuss **guidelines when dealing with difficult customers**, how **to map out a social media plan**, and wrap it up with a **case study showing** how **communities and brands can come together** for the good of all involved.

15.1 introduction

In the previous chapter, we introduced the concept of social media, and detailed some of the major social media channels and platforms. This chapter addresses how one might use these spaces strategically in a number of ways. While the channels and platforms available might change, the foundations of a successful social media strategy won't. By planning and thinking strategically, while leaving room to be flexible and dynamic, you'll be able to make the most of what social has to offer.

Social media channels are communication channels, which can be used to solve business, marketing and communication challenges. As more and more time is spent by consumers online, and that time is increasingly dominated by social media usage, organisations need to incorporate social media into their marketing strategies. In the US, comScore figures show that nine out of 10 internet users visit social networks, while Nielsen data indicates that Americans spend nearly a quarter of their time online on social networking sites and blogs.

This chapter will guide you through the strategic use of social media, the steps to creating a social media strategy, and the documents and protocols you should have in place for social media success.

15.2 using social media to solve business challenges

Social media can be used strategically in a number of marketing and communication challenges:

- **Community management**
- **Support and customer service**
- **Reputation management**
- **Search engine optimisation**
- **Communication and outreach**
- **Advertising and awareness**
- **Sales and lead generation**
- **Insights and research**

15.2.1 Community Management

Social media platforms are built around communities, and sometimes are virtual representations of real world networks and communities. This same feature of social media can be used to build and maintain a community around, or supported by, your organisation.



Figure 15.1 *The use of social media marketing can help with a number of business challenges.*

“Community manager” is a relatively new role that has risen to prominence with the growth of social media usage by organisations. It has, however, been an important role in any community - from communities that thrive on forums to those run on platforms such as Facebook.

Creating, building and nurturing a community means that organisations don’t only participate in conversations that are happening about and around them, but also actively lead and guide those conversations. These communities are generally made up of that organisation’s biggest fans: those who feel like they have a strong stake in that organisation. It creates an environment where those fans can interact directly with the organisation, where the organisation can send messages directly to those fans, and where the organisation can elicit particular feedback from fans.

Building and maintaining a community is a long-term plan. It starts with determining what the best platform is for that community: something that already exists (such as Facebook – www.facebook.com), or building a community platform for a particular community (either from scratch or using something like Ning – www.ning.com).

15.2.2 Support and Customer Service

Social media is becoming an additional customer service channel. As consumers are increasingly comfortable transacting online, there is an expectation that the businesses they transact with will also respond to customer queries in the social space. Some customers have also found that customer service in

a social space tends to be resolved more quickly, as brands are wary of having unresolved issues remaining out in public. For any organisation that runs a social community, customer service is often one of the primary functions of servicing that community.



Figure 15.2 Virgin Atlantic's Twitter page is an example of Twitter used for customer support.

discussion

What are the rewards and risks of having non-employees providing support in an online community?

What is interesting is that customer service in social media channels starts to become collaborative, with customers assisting customers and in doing so, reducing the reliance on an organisation for support. Collaborative support tools such as Get Satisfaction (www.getsatisfaction.com) are used by numerous organisations to great effect. According to Get Satisfaction's website, over 40 000 organisations use their service, including Microsoft and Zappos. Even businesses which use social media channels such as Facebook for customer support can see other community members providing support to each other.

15.2.3 Reputation Management

Online reputation management (ORM) is growing as brands and individuals realise that the combination of search and social media means that all mentions of a brand or individual are only a quick search away, whether they be positive or negative. Social media is one of the spaces where a brand or individual may easily, and quickly, either respond to mentions, or find ways to further their own agenda.

Social media refers to a range of media, from images to videos, to networks and text-based messages. With a little bit of planning and keyword research, a brand can use those social assets to effectively own searches on their brand name.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "coca cola". The search bar contains "coca cola" and the search button is visible. Below the search bar, it indicates "About 178,000,000 results (0.07 seconds)". The left sidebar shows navigation options like "Everything", "Images", "Videos", "News", "Shopping", "Realtime", and "More". The main results area shows:

- Coca-Cola Global: Soft Drinks & Beverage Products** - A global leader in the beverage industry, the Coca-Cola company offers hundreds of brands, including soft drinks, fruit juices, sports drinks and other ... United States - Kenya - Egypt - South Africa www.coca-cola.com/ - Cached - Similar
- Coca-Cola** - Coke in the USA; Coca Cola · The Coca-Cola Company · About the Coca-Cola ... www.coca-cola.com/en/index.html - Cached [Show more results from coca-cola.com](#)
- Coca-Cola: The Coca-Cola Company** - From Diet Coke to POWERADE, discover the brands that put The Coca-Cola Company on the map. With the latest news, advertising jobs and more, at the official ... [Show stock quote for KO](#) www.thecoca-colacompany.com/ - Cached - Similar
- News for coca cola**
 - Wall Street is Eyed in Metal Squeeze** - 10 hours ago - Coca-Cola and other consumers say that Metro in particular is allowing the ... Coca-Cola, which has complained to the LME, says it can take months to get ... Wall Street Journal - 48 related articles - Shared by 50+
 - Cops bust lottery scam, two Nigerians arrested** - Times of India - 3 related articles
 - Music beyond Bollywood-in Coke Studio** - Times of India - 19 related articles - Shared by 5+
- Coca-Cola - Wikipedia. the free encyclopedia**

At the bottom left, there are options for "Any time" (Latest, Past 24 hours, Past 2 days, Past week, Past month, Past year, Custom range...), "All results" (Wonder wheel, Timeline, More search tools), and "Something different".

Figure 15.3 As you can see, Coca-Cola ‘owns’ the first page on the SERPs for their brand name.

The other side to reputation management is actually responding to social mentions of the brand, whether thanks and affirmation for positive mentions, or recognition and resolution for negative mentions. Some of this will fall to the community manager, and will be guided by your escalation protocol.

15.2.4 Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Social media plays an important role in SEO. Social media provide additional assets that can be optimised so that a brand may “own” the results page for searches for their brand. A savvy SEO strategy will also make use of social media assets, links and likes for strengthening the position of other web assets in the search engine results pages.

15.2.5 Communication and Outreach

Unlike other media, social media offers brands an effective two-way communication channel, and a real-time broadcast channel. This bi-directional communication is what makes social communities so exciting (and challenging). Just as consumers can communicate with each other, and send messages to businesses and brands, so businesses and brands can use this medium to communicate with and reach out to the public. Increasingly, social media is becoming a highly effective public communications tool.

Businesses, governments and other organisations use Twitter and Facebook to broadcast timely messages, allowing interested parties to keep informed in real-time. This is fast becoming a vital aspect of newsworthy and breaking news events such as elections, disasters and global sporting events. Many organisations also use social media tools to broadcast service updates.

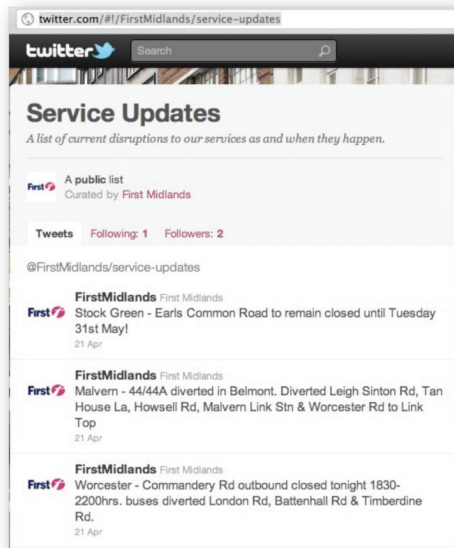
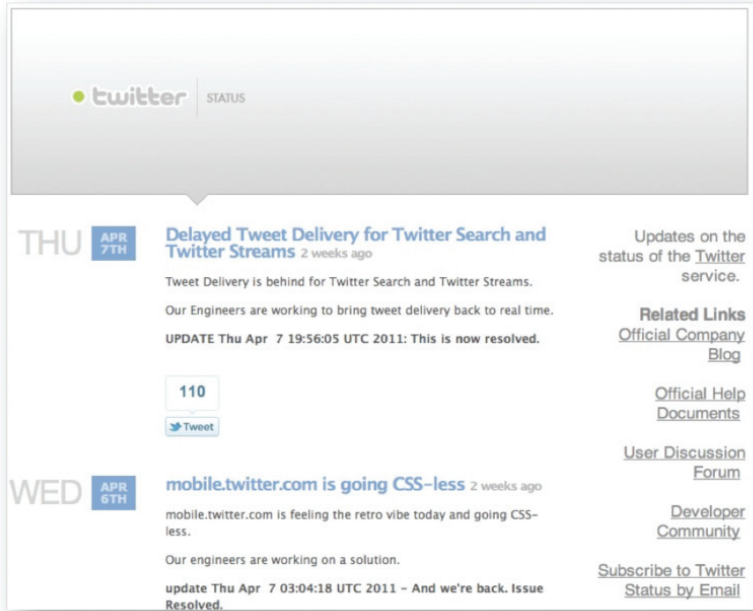


Figure 15.4 Twitter uses a social media tool to broadcast service updates.

15.2.6 Advertising and Awareness

Where there is an audience, there is advertising. The more time people spend in social media, the more brands want to advertise there. It's not just the time people spend on social networks that make them appealing advertising options - it's also the rich demographic targeting opportunities. Adverts can be targeted based on the profiling information that individuals provide, either overtly or through their actions on the social network.

Most social networks offer advertising options, providing for both the small advertiser as well as the large, big-spending advertiser. This is still a dynamic space, as the networks experiment with different formats and models. Some of the advertising opportunities for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn are listed below.

Facebook offers two paid for advertising solutions: Ad Space Units (ASUs) which can be bought on either a cost per thousand impressions (CPM) or CPC cost per click (CPC) basis, or Facebook Engagement Ads which are bought on a CPM basis with a minimum spend threshold.

ASUs have no minimum spend, and are the small adverts which appear on Facebook pages that are not the home page. These adverts are served based on interests and demographic information. For example, an advertiser can request to have their advert shown to all women in London who are interested in men, who are themselves single and between 25 and 35, and who like dogs or puppies. It does sound like an elaborate dating profile advert, but at the time of writing, an advert such as the one just described matched 1 020 people on Facebook.



Figure 15.5 Facebook advertising makes it possible to target people according to their interests.

Facebook engagement adverts are adverts that are on a user's home page, next to the stream. These are larger adverts, and are more engaging. These tend to be more interactive adverts, such as polls, videos or events. Facebook Advertising information can be found at www.facebook.com/advertising.

Twitter introduced advertising in 2010, with Promoted Tweets, and now also offers Promoted Trends and Promoted Accounts. At time of going to print, Twitter's advertising options start at \$5 000 US per month. Promoted Tweets, Trends or Accounts help to put the advertisers message at the top of search results, trends, or follow suggestions for a given time period. More information can be found at <http://business.twitter.com/advertise/start>.

note

Take a look at this in action: head to www.youtube.com/user/Expendables to see an interview with Sylvester Stallone for *The Expendables*.

YouTube launched a number of advertising options in 2010, including Promote Your Video (PYV). Advertisers can also plan bespoke page takeovers by partnering with YouTube, used to great effect by several movie studios to promote upcoming releases. YouTube self managed advertising makes this platform very accessible, and is a great way to promote video content. You can find out more at www.youtube.com/t/advertising_overview.

LinkedIn offers self service adverts, amongst other advertising and marketing solutions. LinkedIn Ads is a self-service advertising solution that allows you to create and place adverts on prominent pages on the LinkedIn.com website. You target the adverts by specifying which LinkedIn members view your adverts by selecting a target audience: job title, job function, industry, geography, age, gender, company name, company size, or LinkedIn Group. More information about LinkedIn solutions can be found at www.linkedin.com/advertising.

15.2.7 Sales and Lead Generation

Adding a social layer to a commercial experience can create a richer experience for online consumers. These can be based overtly on social connections, or on inferred connections based on behaviour.

note

Diesel created a Facebook photo booth in select stores so that shoppers could share their changing room outfits with their friends. You can see the video case study at www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-zA90yl64.

Levi's Friends Store (<http://store.levi.com>) is an example of the former. Visiting the website while signed in to Facebook allows you to see which of your friends like which styles. Levi's can then present this information with data that includes your friends' upcoming birthdays. This is useful feedback for you, as you can see which styles are more popular among your friends, as well as users in general. This provides insight for Levi's who can see which styles are more popular than others. You can see how it works at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ed5vJeaEuzA>.

An excellent example of the layer based on inferred connections is Amazon's collaborative filtering. If you've browsed on Amazon.com, you will no doubt have seen on product pages information like "people who bought this, also bought that". In real-time, based on consumer purchase behaviour, Amazon presents products that you are likely to have an interest in, based on people who browsed and purchased products that you like. Although you might not realise it, this is a social layer on the online shopping experience.

Social communities can also be lead generation or sales generation assets. Within Facebook, for example, applications on brand pages can allow for eCommerce or lead generation within the Facebook environment.

15.2.8 Insight and Research

Social media can be a very powerful insight and research asset, but the information needs to be judged in its proper context. When you are planning, social media can provide a rich source of data, both demographic and preference based.

You can use the information people share freely to understand more about your market, or your brand or product. ORM tools help you to track mentions and sentiment, giving you insight into how you are perceived. Using social network ad planners, such as Facebook's ASUs or YouTube's Ad Planner, can give you rich information about the size of your market, and things that they like.

Using ORM again, you can measure sentiment and volume changes of mentions to help you to understand the impact of other campaigns. These can be television commercials, or online campaigns.

Building your online community also gives you a group you can reach out to for information and feedback, though bear in mind that they are inherently biased just by the fact that they would join your social community. You could also use communities such as Flickr to see what people are sharing about their lives, without even realising. Head over to www.flickr.com and search for "in my fridge" for a snapshot of this in action.

This social data can be very valuable, but must be treated correctly. The lists of the top ten brands mentioned in on and offline conversations only have two brands in common, according to Ed Keller of word-of-mouth specialist the Keller Fay Group (Research, 2009). It is qualitative information, and is in many ways secondary research. For research purposes, it can and should be used to help form research questions for further communication.

15.3 creating a social media strategy

Social media is a fast moving channel, which means proper planning is vital to success. Successful social media strategies come from the underpinning knowledge that social media is a two-way communication channel: organisations interacting in this space need the resources not only to push messages out, but to deal with the messages coming in.

15.3.1 Social Media Risks and Challenges

Any social media strategy should account for the risks and challenges of interacting in this environment, and should incorporate protocol for dealing with these risks. It's important for marketers to understand the risks and challenges associated with social media: mistakes on the web can take a long time to recover from.

Some of the common risks and challenges are listed below.

No one cares. Especially when building a community from scratch, it can be difficult in the beginning to get the traction you desire. This is why understanding the landscape in the context of your organisation's market is so important. Make sure you are interacting in the spaces where your customers are, and where they are happy to hear from you.

The social media space is used by unhappy customers (who are free to post detractive comments). Even if the only feedback you are getting is negative, this is good feedback! Now you have an opportunity to do something about it.

It requires ongoing attention and monitoring. Social media channels may be free, but there is still a time and resource investment required to make your social media strategy a success. Understand what your objectives are for using social media, and budget the time required to meet those.

It can be difficult to measure the impact of the campaign. Social media can be difficult to measure, but that does not mean that your campaigns are not successful. Don't expect to find a solution (or success) overnight. Start with measuring things that can be measured easily, and watch for case studies in this space that will help you to turn your social media investment into revenue for your organisation.

15.3.2 Social Media Strategy

Planning is the foundation of success. Here is one method to approaching social media strategically.

1. Get Buy-in

It's important that there is buy-in for your foray into social media. It may be seen as a free resource, but even if you are not paying for exposure, there is a time and resource investment required. There might be a number of stakeholders who need to be aware of social media plans, and these stakeholders may be both internal and external. And, of course there will be sign-off needed for any budgeting or additional resourcing requirements.

Taking pause to address the various stakeholders will also force you to do the research and planning necessary to take the next steps.



Figure 15.6 *The steps involved in a social media strategy.*

2. Understand the Landscape

It's important to take a step back first. Social media is more than the social spaces you might interact with in your personal capacity. A good first step to understanding the landscape is to listen.

Some important questions to answer include:

- What conversation already exists around your brand, your industry and your competitors?
- Where does it take place?
- Who is doing most of the talking?

ORM tools, such as BrandsEye (www.brandseye.com) or Radian6 (www.radian6.com) can help you with the listening part of your planning, but in the early stages you might want to start with free tools such as Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts).

3. Analyse

Using all the data you have been gathering, analyse! Think critically about social media and your brand, as well as your brand's broader marketing, communication and business challenges. All of this should be looked at within the context of the information that you already know about your local marketing and business environment.

note

A brand ambassador is someone who is so passionate and positive about your brand that he can't stop talking about it. Famously, the Coca-Cola Facebook Fan Page was created by two fans (which attracted the interest of Coca-Cola) and is now jointly run by Coca-Cola and the two fans. Get the full story by watching their video at www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=57458127013. You can visit the page at www.facebook.com/cocacola.

Your outcomes here should include:

- A list of the social spaces your brand should be in. This is based on who your customers are, where they interact, and where they expect to interact with you.
- Non-official groups that already exist.
- An overview of the existing conversation (volume, frequency and sentiment), as well as any content or conversation themes that occur.
- An overview of your competitors in this space.
- A list of potential brand ambassadors.

4. Set Objectives

Your objectives are the desired outcome of your social media strategy. These should be based within the context of your marketing and business challenges.

Firstly, you need to address how you will use social media for your organisation. You then need to set objectives for each of those.

To make them tangible and measurable, establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for your objectives, with benchmarks and targets where appropriate.

Determine:

- What is it that you want to achieve?
- When do you want to achieve this by?
- How will you measure your success?

For instance, your objective could be to grow a community of fans around your brand in a particular country. Thus, your KPI might be fan numbers, and you could look to set a target of 5 000 Facebook fans over six months.

5. Create an action plan

Once you have a clear idea of what you wish, you can begin compiling an action plan to get there.

This is where you need to make sure you have created the necessary documents and processes that form the foundation of your plan. These include tone of voice guidelines, community guidelines and conversation calendars, as well as roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

You will need to:

- Decide on the roles and responsibilities of the project team.
- Determine what social media properties you will make use of.
- Commit to a volume of activity.
- Develop a conversation plan.

6. Implement

This is the fun stuff! It's time to kick off your plans and put all that research and thought into action. Alert stakeholders that you are starting your engagement plans, and make sure you have any tracking requirements in place. Continue to monitor for mentions of your organisation, and responses to your messages. Keep to your general plan, but be prepared to adapt.

7. Track, Analyse, Optimise

This is the beautiful thing about digital marketing: you can track every single user interaction and use this information to continually learn from and improve your efforts. You should track the success of your social media campaigns on an ongoing basis, and set milestones for your team at less frequent intervals (every couple of months or so) when you will sit down and do a more in-depth review.

There are several tools you can use for tracking social media. You will need to build a suite of tools to suit your measurement and reporting requirements.

Platform insights

Facebook, YouTube, and (for advertisers) Twitter offer analytics and insights. These are a useful starting point for reporting on your social media efforts, from numbers of followers or fans, to interactions with the content you share.

Web Analytics

If you are using social media channels to send traffic to your own website, you should tag the links so that you can segment that traffic in your website reports. In Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics), you would use campaign tracking parameters.

URL shorteners

URL shortening services such as bit.ly and ow.ly offer usage data that will tell you how many people click on links you share, when they click on them, and where in the world they are from.

ORM software

ORM software, such as BrandsEye (www.brandseye.com), is an important measurement investment that you will need to make. ORM software helps you to keep track of all mentions of your brand, and understand the sentiment and influence of those mentions. You should be tracking this for changes over time.

Social Media Dashboards

There are a number of services that make it easier for you to centralise management of several social media properties, as well as making collaborative management easier. They also integrate analytics data from a number of sources, making reporting easier.

Some services include:

- HootSuite (www.hootsuite.com)
- Spredfast (www.spredfast.com)
- CoTweet (www.cotweet.com)
- Sprout Social (www.sproutsocial.com)

15.4 documents and processes

Good documentation and processes are the foundation for social media success, especially as this dynamic space is likely to involve many stakeholders from across your organisation. In order to ensure that there is consistency across the various channels, processes and guidelines should be a part of your social media strategy.

Start with the documentation and processes you already have in place for marketing and communication: brand and tone of voice guidelines, PR policies, etc. Build on these to create a robust foundation that suits this spontaneous, dynamic space.

A Social Media Checklist is a good starting point to make sure that you have everything in place. Example Community Guidelines, Conversation Calendar and Escalation Protocol are also included for you.

Community guidelines

As well as a privacy policy and terms and conditions, it's a good idea to establish community guidelines for the communities you manage, especially when the community is on behalf of a brand. Community guidelines help to set the tone for the community, and are useful to refer to should community members behave in a way that is undesirable. Of course, community guidelines don't prevent such behaviour, but are useful to fall back on should you need to remove comments or community members.

Guidelines should be friendly, with the tone in keeping with your community or brand. You can use the below as starting point, but customise for your situation.

note

You should also take a look at the community guidelines of established, large communities for some inspiration. Some great ones include Flickr (www.flickr.com/guidelines.gne), YouTube (www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines) and the guardian.co.uk (www.guardian.co.uk/community-standards).

Hello fans!

Thanks so much for joining us. Here is a quick overview on how you can get involved in this community.

Do:

- "Like" posts, videos and photos you enjoy and want to see more of
- Comment on posts you find interesting with your feedback
- Share posts you find most compelling with your network by clicking the "share" button or by copy and paste into your own profile

Don't:

- Post obscene, profane, disrespectful or hateful in nature comments
- Harass or threaten any person or organization
- Solicit or advertise through this community
- Post comments that encourage illegal activity

We like it when you do the things that are on the "DO" list. We don't like it when you do things that are on the "DON'T" list. If you do those things, we will remove your comments and posts, and we might remove you from the community. We'd rather not have to do that.

For questions, comments or concerns regarding the above guidelines, please comment below or email us.

Thanks!

Conversation calendar

Conversation calendars help you to plan your community conversation. More than that, they are also useful, centralised planning documents that ensure that various teams are all aware of each other's efforts, and that communications are integrated. For any kind of content and communication strategy, conversation calendars are invaluable.

To start creating a conversation calendar, you should plot everything that is relevant to your community. This could include public events, dates and anniversaries, or events and communications already planned by your organisation.

DATE	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
External							
Internal							
Theme							
Facebook							
Twitter							

Figure 15.7 *The conversation calendar.*

You should also use your conversation calendar for reporting. Keeping track of interactions and responses to your planned posts will help you to determine what kind of posts your community responds to, what days are best for posting, and what frequency works best for your community.

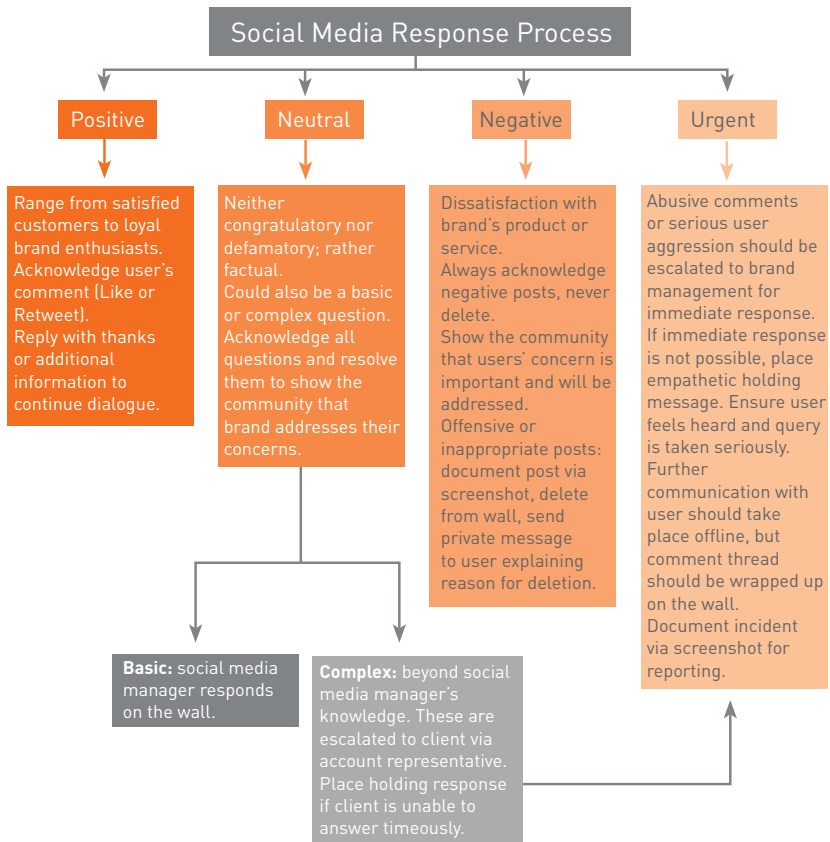
Planning the conversation helps to keep momentum, especially in the early days of building a community. However, it should not replace spontaneity – this is a conversation after all!

Escalation protocol

An established escalation protocol helps to ensure that all parties are aware of procedures for handling social messages, and can respond as appropriate. This is especially necessary for large organisations where several people might be interacting in social media on behalf of a brand, or where several departments or agencies have a stake in the organisation’s social media presence.

An escalation protocol should include:

- Anticipated messages and appropriate, standard responses (for both positive and negative situations).
- Guidelines for determining the sentiment and risk of messages.
- Escalation channels for messages demanding signoff or further consideration.
- Contact details of relevant stakeholders.
- Guidelines for responding, including timelines for response, standard messages and tone.



* Note: this process was created predominantly for Facebook, but these basic principles apply to most social media networking platforms.

Figure 15.8 A decision flow chart is a useful way of disseminating this information.

Social Media Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you have everything in place for social media success. It all starts with a good plan.

	Item
	Account logins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Twitter • YouTube • Blog
	Item
	Community Guidelines available online and linked to where appropriate
	Social Media strategy and content strategy
	Roles and responsibilities
	Risks and escalation plan
	Brand voice guidelines
	Social media guidelines for agencies and employees
	Monitoring and listening plan
	Reporting: tracking and insights

Figure 15.9 The social media checklist.

15.5 summary

Social media can be used strategically in a number of marketing and communication challenges:

- Community management
- Support and customer service
- Reputation management
- Search engine optimisation
- Communication and outreach
- Advertising and awareness
- Sales and lead generation
- Insights and research

Creating a social media strategy requires careful planning, and a strong foundation in processes that will allow you to be dynamic.

The steps to creating a social media strategy include:

- Get buy-in
- Understand the landscape
- Analyse
- Set objectives
- Create an action plan
- Implement
- Track, Analyse, Optimise!

For any organisation, social media is a vital strategic consideration. Whether your organisation is actively involved in social media or not, your consumers are to some extent. If nothing else, this means that there is market data available to you, if you just take a little time to find it.

Organisations making a considered move in the social media sphere will find it both challenging and rewarding. The rapid feedback loop can often challenge preconceptions or even marketing plans, as the voice of the customer is amplified through social media. However, the collaboration with passionate customer stakeholders is what is so rewarding.

15.6 case study: MWEB, Free the Web

In 2010, MWEB launched its affordable uncapped broadband service. Utilising this product, the internet service provider set out to significantly change the South African Internet landscape.



The challenges were to:

- Re-establish MWEB as an innovative ISP and market leader.
- Build a demand and following for uncapped ADSL in the South African online community.
- Create a permission asset (a database or central point where users have given you permission to market to them).
- Reduce the impact of an immediate competitor response, by keeping the brand and product offering a secret up until launch day.
- All of this was to be accomplished in the three weeks leading up to the big reveal on 18 March 2010.

Given that the need for a higher quality Internet was seen as the message at the centre of the campaign, Quirk understood that a community would be required to build momentum and awareness around this central message. The natural next step was to use a social networking platform to share the message.

In order to decide which platform to use, it was important to consider the target market. It was established that users who are frustrated by slow Internet access tend to be the ones who actively use the Internet. It was therefore a safe assumption to make that these users would be active in social networking spaces.

Various mediums were considered, with Facebook as the final choice. Quirk set up an anonymous Facebook Fan page called Free the Web SA. This would allow as many people, who care about the brands message, to spread the word as possible. The project team was able to tap into an existing conversation about the limitations of the Internet in South Africa and rallied a passionate community around the cause.

It's worth pointing out that while Facebook was a valuable platform for MWEB, the lesson to take home is that it suited the needs of the brand in this specific instance. Only after this was established did the team engage with the requirements and possibilities of the platform. They needed to understand how the Facebook ecosystem worked in order to achieve success for MWEB.

By launch day on 18 March, more than 15 000 people (in three weeks) had joined the Free the Web movement in anticipation of the big reveal.

MWEB's call centre was inundated with product enquiries and sales, gaining immediate and significant market share. Throughout the launch period, a team at Quirk monitored the online conversation, responding to all queries using the online reputation management tool, BrandsEye (<http://www.brandseye.com>).

Major online publications took note, including the Mail and Guardian, TimesLive and IOL.

Throughout the launch period, online mentions of the brand increased by almost 4 000%, reaching close on half a million people.

Within three weeks of launching the Facebook fan page, MWEB received over:

- 2 333 comments from fans.
- 2198 wall posts.
- And 2 561 likes.

That's a total of 7 092 interactions.

Today Free The Web SA brought to you by MWEB, still remains. With more than 23 000 followers, the Facebook page acts as a direct link to online customer support.

While the Facebook platform and the creation of the online community proved successful in meeting the challenges faced by MWEB in this instance, it should be noted that masked marketing must be managed very carefully, and can anger customers if not managed correctly. In short, the legitimacy of the cause and sincerity of the brand will always be interrogated if customers feel misled.

case study questions

1. Why a community?
2. Why do you think they went with Facebook as a medium?
3. How did they know a Facebook fan page would target people who were passionate about improved Internet services?
4. What challenges might they have faced had they not correctly managed the platform?

chapter questions

1. What are some of the pitfalls of engaging difficult customers on social media platforms?
2. Do you think blended search results are good or bad for a brand? Why?
3. Should all brands be active in social media spaces? What brands have less to gain from trying to create an online community?

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[Accessed 28 April 2011]

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[Accessed 28 April 2011]

further reading

- www.feverbee.com - Practical advice for growing online communities.
- www.rohitbhargava.typepad.com - Influential Marketing Blog from Rohit Bhargava.

What's inside: We start with an **introduction** to WebPR, the **key terms and concepts** you need for this chapter and the **history** of WebPR as it changed to **keep pace with a growing digital world**. We look at **how it works** and discuss how **SEO and social media** have changed the once **traditional press release**. We note some **websites and directories** you should familiarise yourself with. We also look at how press offices have adapted to a world of **open information**, how **PR Gurus** fit into the scheme of things and some handy **tools of the trade** for WebPR. Finally we end with a **summary** of the chapter, and a look at **how it all fits together**.

16.1 introduction

“Public Relations is a set of management, supervisory, and technical functions that foster an organization’s ability to strategically listen to, appreciate, and respond to those persons whose mutually beneficial relationships with the organization are necessary if it is to achieve its missions and values.” (Heath, 2005)

Traditional public relations (PR) has focused on crafted news releases and company image. It has provided for a controlled release of information, and a communication process that relies on journalists and traditional media such as newspapers. This modus operandi has been enormously impacted by the spread and influence of the Internet.

Whilst the Internet provides excellent tools to the PR industry, the shift in communications afforded by the Internet has also caused a ruckus in the world of public relations. Information is freely available and accessible to a far greater audience, as opposed to being controlled by a select group of journalists. Communication is taking place in the realm where the consumer feels most comfortable, as opposed to through the channels dictated by a company.

“PR professionals are using social media in a lot of ways to either supplement or add on to existing PR strategies. The most successful PR pros focus on creating active relationships and truly engaging with their customers (or constituents) to have a real conversation.” (Warren, 2010)

The Internet offers the savvy PR professional plenty of tools for listening to and engaging with a far wider community, and can have immense benefits for companies that are willing to be transparent in their communications. It also allows companies to engage in a more immediate form of communication.

WebPR collectively stands for the ways in which you can get your message out online. It is used to connect with customers and enhance brand awareness, exposure and search engine optimisation (SEO) efforts using various online channels like news sites, article directories, news release sites, industry related sites, online newsrooms, blogs, forums and social media.

“As marketers with business goals to achieve, we need to take a break from our frenzy to drive sales and increase social media engagement to remember that there are real people at the other end of our marketing communications and social media outreach who deserve to be treated with respect.” (Cohen, 2010)

16.2 history

As communication tools became available with the spread of the Internet, so they became available to the PR industry. It also revealed a wider audience for a company's stories, and developed new channels for promoting them. With the rise of social media, and especially the growing influence of bloggers, it became clear that PR officers needed to reach out to more than just journalists.

However, the road has been rocky, and traditional PR has in some instances struggled to cope with the new rules of engagement.

In February 2006, Tom Foremski wrote in his post "Die! News release! Die! Die! Die!": "I've been telling the PR industry for some time now that things cannot go along as they are . . . business as usual while mainstream media goes to hell in a hand basket."

Chris Anderson, editor in chief of *Wired* and author of "The Long Tail", announced on his blog in October 2007 that he was blocking "Lazy flacks [who] send news releases to the Editor in Chief of *Wired* because they can't be bothered to find out who on my staff, if anyone, might actually be interested in what they're pitching."

However, a 2010 experiment by Oriella PR Network showed that 75% of journalists find a well-targeted news release useful (Oriella PR Network).

16.3 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Backlink	A link at another site, leading to your site and also called an incoming link. These are seen as indications of popularity by search engines.
Boilerplate	Standard wording about an organisation that usually appears at the foot of a news release.
Consumer generated media (CGM)	This is any media created by web users and not established agencies or brands. For example, many opinion videos or parodies can be considered CGM.
Key phrase	Word or words being optimised for by a website. Also used to refer to words that are used by users of search engines.
Online press room	A part of a website aimed at providing journalists with pertinent corporate information, such as PR contacts, images and news releases.
Online reputation management (ORM)	Ensuring that you know what is being said about you online, and that you are leading the conversation.

News release	Also called a press release, this is an electronic or paper document issued to the media with the intention of gaining news coverage. It follows established layout guidelines.
Real simple syndication (RSS)	RSS is an easy way of syndicating content, and aggregating content. RSS allows for users to access the information on a website without all the extra bumph.
Search engine optimisation. (SEO)	Making sure that you are achieving optimal rankings by the search engines
Social media	The media that is published, created and shared by individuals on the Internet, such as blogs, images, video and more.
Syndicate	Making content available for distribution among selected clients.
Traditional Media	Newspapers, magazines, television and publishing houses are the realm of traditional media.

16.4 how it works

The most important component of successful PR is **listening** to your customers. Not only are they telling you what they want, you will also be able to tell how well your message is being received. In the chapter on online reputation management (ORM), the tools used to listen online were discussed.

If PR is about connecting with your customers, it should be about **responding** to them by engaging with them in conversation, where that conversation is taking place.

Thirdly, WebPR allows you to **build your own** voice. Though you cannot control the message, you should lead the conversation through transparent communications.

Listen to your customers

ORM will enable a company to listen to what is being said about them online. Particularly important is to regularly monitor all channels that a customer might use to contact or talk about a company. This includes forums and consumer action websites, as well as keeping track of mentions on personal blogs.

Not only does this allow a trend to emerge of general sentiment related to the company, but it will also enable awareness of issues that need attention.

Respond to others

ORM describes the tools that can be used to find out what is being said about a company online. A key function of WebPR is to respond to those conversations with a consistent voice. Consumer generated media can and must be

responded to. Being publically available, and publically searchable, means that consumer generated media forms part of the public perception of a company. As discussed in the chapter on ORM, search results often show consumer generated media. These are messages that a company cannot control.

Blogs and forums are key starting points for responding. Responding in these media ensures that a company's response may be viewed along with the original message.

What to consider

Transparency and honesty is vital. Any semblance of "PR speak" or "spin" could see this worthy outreach backfiring. An authentic voice works best, as does a thick skin.

Respond to the good and the bad – it shows that the company is listening to all conversations.

Build your own voice

Whether or not a company has a website, it most likely has a web presence. Not only are businesses listed in online directories, but they are also mentioned in consumer generated media. However, companies need to pay attention to the voice that is presented by their online presence, and use the tools of the Internet to enhance that voice.

Establishing long-term trusting consumer relationships through online article syndication, news releases and blogging aids a company's ability to craft online credibility, placing it in a better position to respond to future criticism. These tools also help build links to a company's site. And, of course, links increase traffic and have search engine optimisation (SEO) benefits.

note

Social media, ORM and WebPR are all intertwined – have you noticed? It's all about conversations, how to listen to the chatter and how to get involved in it as well.

The screenshot shows a forum interface with a navigation bar at the top containing 'User Name', 'Password', 'Log in', 'Help', and 'Register'. Below the navigation bar is a search bar and a 'Remember Me?' checkbox. The main content area displays a forum thread titled 'Forum: SEO Online Forums' with 18 threads. A table lists the threads with their titles, start dates, and statistics:

Title / Thread Starter	Replies / Views	Last Post By
Need dofollow article sites with instant approval Started by abbyssmith, 03-15-2011 07:49 AM	Replies: 1 Views: 102	Jermaine07 Today 02:16 AM
Finding an untapped profitable niche... Started by jakuberm, 02-21-2011 11:25 AM	Replies: 2 Views: 92	Jermaine07 Today 02:15 AM
Google Sitemaps Started by SeoDezin, 03-06-2011 04:35 PM	Replies: 5 Views: 110	Jermaine07 05-13-2011 02:37 AM
Link Wheel Started by SeoDezin, 02-25-2011 05:52 PM	Replies: 10 Views: 181	Jermaine07 05-13-2011 02:30 AM
What is meant by Link Bait in SEO Started by William Smith, 04-23-2011 10:50 AM	Replies: 4	Jermaine07

Figure 16.1 To listen to your customers online, monitor blogs, websites and forums.

While it used to be that messages were dispersed to journalists who would then broadcast them to a reading public, today that practice does not always exist to disseminate the information being transmitted. This provides tremendous opportunity for companies to be fully involved in engaging with their customers.

WebPR is not about throwing out the PR rulebook. It's about using the Internet to fully realise its communication potential.

16.5 webPR tactics

16.5.1 Online Article Syndication

Online article syndication is one of WebPR's principal and most successful tactics. It involves writing articles that are in no way a direct promotion of your site. These are not news releases; they are written to provide information and valuable content. Articles are submitted to online article directories, where they are picked up and republished on other sites.

As the articles contain links and keywords relevant to your site, the benefits for search engine marketing are excellent. But the strategy won't work unless people want to read your articles - so they need to be broad, informative and not just thinly disguised adverts. Remember, we're in the public relations chapter here.

Each article will also have an 'About the Author' section. This could contain up to three links to your site and many article directories will allow you to include a backlink in the body of the article as well. The aim: the article gets republished on many web and blog sites in the weeks after it is published. In order to ensure your site remains the search engine authority on the article's subject, the article should be published and indexed there first. Online article syndication not only allows you to introduce fresh, optimised content to your site but enables you to generate valuable SEO backlinks.

Articles containing relevant information are value-adding and therefore **attract links naturally**. And, if published on a third-party site, should carry a link back to your own website. This drives visitors to the site that are automatically predisposed to your brand, and are therefore more likely to engage and buy the products on offer.

Writing an article for online syndication

Choose a topic

By looking at your website's content themes and key phrases associated with them, you will be able to write targeted, key phrase-rich articles. Listening to

the conversations around your brand and taking note of what customers are saying, can also lead you to topics relevant to your audience. Refer to your SEO strategy, to create articles that complement your SEO efforts.

Optimise the article and publish it to your own site

Using SEO and web copy guidelines, ensure the content is optimised for search engines, as well as engaging for readers. Publish the article to your own website first, to establish the authority of your website. Doing this will:

- Allow you to reap the SEO benefits of fresh, optimised copy.
- Enable your site to be regarded as the expert on that subject.
- Avoid Google's strict duplicate content policies.

Firstly, the article needs to be optimised for your website. Implement all the tactics covered in the online copywriting chapter, such as correct metadata, optimised title and key phrases, optimal use of <h> tags and links. Once it is live you will need to **wait for it to be indexed by the search engines**. If you type the article title into the search engine and it returns the page with your article on it as a result, it has been indexed and is ready to be submitted to the online article syndication sites.

The article then needs to be edited for syndicating. Different directories have their own requirements and guidelines which need to be adhered to.

For example, some directories require that all links to your website in the body of the text, bar one, would need to be removed, as well as all mentions of your company as a brand name. You will also need to create an **"About the Author"** section at the end of the article. This is essentially the boilerplate used to tell readers more about your company and the information they'll have access to by visiting the site. You will be able to add two or three links in this section, depending on the directory. Send one link to the home page and the other(s) to pages within the site, preferably a page that has been optimised for the key phrase used in the link's anchor text.

Most directories allow the inclusion of keywords relevant to the article. Ensure these are relevant to the article and that the key phrases for which you have optimised the article are included. These key phrases will allow readers to find your articles, using the search function on the directories. This is also called **tagging** your article.

Many directories also allow a **description**. This description will be displayed, along with the title of the article, when someone has searched the directory for a key phrase or category for which you have tagged your article. The description should entice the user to read your article, so it needs to be succinct yet gripping.

Once you have done this, you will need to **convert the article into HTML**. The HTML is very basic, and while the different directories have their own HTML guidelines which you will need to familiarise yourself with, the standard tags are as follows.

- **To bold:** phrase you wish to bold
- **To italicise:** <i>phrase you wish to italicise</i>
- **To underline:** <>phrase you wish to underline</>
- **To list:** lines you wish to list
- **To create a paragraph:** <p>
- **To insert a line break:**

- **To insert a link:** phrase you wish to link

```
<div class="content-block">
  <h1>Hello!</h1>
  <p>Quirk is a marketing agency. Born digital, driven by creativity and disciplined
by results.</p>
  <p>Founded in 1999 and with an international footprint, we deliver marketing
solutions for businesses and brands that seek to <strong>engage with connected audiences</
strong>. We accomplish this through campaigns, platforms and software applications that take
advantage of the rapidly evolving relationship between technology and consumer.</p>
  <p>Our success is primarily a result of how we are organised. Unlike many
agencies, <strong>our model is built-for-purpose</strong> and focuses on an approach we call
T.C.E.O.:</p>
  <ul>
    <li>Think</li>
    <li>Create</li>
    <li>Engage</li>
    <li>Optimise</li>
  </ul>
```

Figure 16.2 Sample HTML from www.quirk.biz

For each directory, the submission guidelines will indicate requirements for the text.

Submit the article to directories

Publishing the articles to directories means that they can be picked up and republished on other sites, which **contributes significantly to link-building efforts**. There are hundreds of online article directories out there but you need to be selective when choosing which ones to submit to. The good article directories usually allow up to four links to be placed in each article.

Here is a list of a few article syndication sites that you could publish your articles to:

- www.ezinearticles.com
- www.goarticles.com
- www.articledashboard.com

- www.amazines.com
- www.articlerich.com
- www.isnare.com
- www.articlesbase.com

These directories all **allow three to four links**, they all give **statistics** on how the articles are doing and they all allow you to **preview the article** before you publish it – it is important to be able to preview it to ensure that no mistakes were made during the HTML conversion process.

You will need to **register for an account**; all of the above article directories are free.

Once you have submitted the article it will undergo a review process – the directories do this to ensure the articles are actually useful and relevant rather than simply advertorials. It will then be approved and available to read on the site. From here people who are interested in republishing the article on their own sites/blogs can do so as long as they reproduce the content exactly as you have submitted it. If the article is well-written and informative it has the **capacity to go viral** which is the ultimate goal, as the more times it is republished, the more links you will acquire – and all **at no cost to you**.

Monitor its progress

A bit of basic **online reputation monitoring** (ORM) will enable you to keep an eye on where your article is being republished and that it is being republished correctly - there's no use in sites republishing it if they're going to strip out all the links and the "About the Author" section which you included.

16.5.2 News Releases: Optimised for Search and for Social Media

The news release is a stalwart of public relations. It is a standardised format for releasing information. Originally intended to provide information to journalists, increasingly news releases are being read without going through the journalists first. PR has also realised the tremendous impact of bloggers, and many PR professionals are using the same news releases in their communications with bloggers. And today, journalists are also bloggers, and bloggers are the new citizen journalists, so the lines are becoming even further blurred.

Newswires, like article directories, allow for online submission of news releases. In turn, these are syndicated via RSS, and so are picked up by the news engines, such as **Google News**, **Yahoo! News**, and **MSN News**. Many people pick up their news via these online news engines, which aggregate news from a number of publications and newswires, so the news release is becoming an ever more crucial means of reaching a growing audience.

PRLog Free Press Release [+ Bookmark This Page](#)

Home | **Press Releases** | Submit Press Release | Preferences | 6:42 AM

PR Home | Archive | By Category | By Location | By Date | By Tag | Feeds | Alerts | For Journalists | Submit Free Press Release

Filter News

Country

- Australia
- Canada
- China
- Hong Kong
- India
- Singapore
- United Kingdom
- United States
- More ---

Category

- Accounting
- Advertising
- Aerospace
- Affiliate program
- Agriculture
- Apparel
- Architecture
- Arts
- Automotive

Tag

- 911
- Adt
- Advertising
- Alert Life
- Best
- Brinks

<http://www.prlog.org/>

Drowning in oil – author of BP oil disaster book talks to Strategic Direction

Respected author and columnist Loren C. Steffy talks to Strategic Direction about his latest book Drowning in Oil: BP and the Reckless Pursuit of Profit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRLog (Press Release) – May 16, 2011 – United Kingdom, May 2011 - On the first anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, respected author and columnist Loren C. Steffy talks to Strategic Direction about his latest book *Drowning in Oil: BP and the Reckless Pursuit of Profit*, and how a lack of corporate responsibility and government oversight led to the biggest offshore oil spill in US history.

The interview with Loren is freely available to read online until the 22 May 2011. Visit www.emeraldinsight.com/sd.htm and click on sample articles.

Steffy uses the example of the Deepwater Horizon disaster to highlight that within business, vigilance matters. He explains, "When companies have complex and potentially dangerous operations, they cannot afford to get complacent. Years of safe operations does not mean you are not moments away from disaster. Human error is always a factor, but companies need processes that account for it".

He goes on to discuss how the Deepwater Horizon disaster was only part of a larger pattern of cost-cutting, image-making, and winner-take-all corporate culture that compromised safety across BP's operations for years.

Most Viewed Weekly

- [#Winning - Official Sheen Tour Anthem Released](#) - 2908 views
- [MLM Training And News Show To Promote Network Marketing Company Ambassadors And Distributors](#) - 2249 views
- [TechBiz Connection Forum Presents Real Life Social Media Success Stories and Lessons Learned](#) - 1574 views
- [Forex Traders Have a New Option: New Trading System GridBullEA Goes Beyond Robot Expert Advisor](#) - 945 views
- [Red Door Interactive wins Internet Advertising Competition award for Cox Communications](#) - 747 views

Daily News!

- [Red Door Interactive wins Internet Advertising Competition award for Cox Communications](#)
- [Hollywood Helps Alabama Tornado Relief \(@HAlabamaTR\) LIVE 4hr Webcast](#)
- [Website Wellness Score and Report Tool Audit Site/URLs Released by Rank Ace](#)

Figure 16.3 An example of an online news release.

As well as promoting conversation around your company and its products, online news releases should **drive traffic to your site**. To achieve this, news releases need to be **optimised** to contain related **key phrases** and **links**. Not only is this important for the news releases being picked up by news engines, but there are many journalists who will simply reproduce the copy of a well-written news release. Ensure that these reproductions positively impact your SEO efforts by optimising your news releases for key phrases and links.

Don't forget to **publish your news releases on your own site** before sending them to the release sites. You'll want to be considered as the "expert" in the search engine's eyes on the subject, and journalists also need to be able to find all of the information they need on a company website.

Like articles, you will need to write a **description and allocate keywords** to the news release. You will need to ensure that all media contact information is listed. Each site will specify exactly what information is required. Very few of the news release sites allow you to convert your releases into HTML (especially the free release sites). The **category** you select for your news release is extremely important so be sure to have a good look at the categories the site offers and make sure that you select the most appropriate one.

Most of the sites offer a **free option and a paid option**. The paid option provides a host of additional benefits, and it is worth considering paying for a membership to one of them.

Benefits of online news releases

- Online news releases allow for almost instant publishing of news online.
- A well-written news release can garner top rankings in the news engines (Google News, Yahoo! News, MSN News etc). Adequate optimisation can also result in SERP rankings.
- Content is syndicated quickly via RSS.
- Links are built naturally and effectively from online publishing.
- Distribution is increased beyond your contact list.
- Reach is far greater than that of a traditional news release.
- Reach and distribution can be easily tracked online.

Here are some news release sites to consider

- www.i-newswire.com
- www.pr.com
- www.pressexposure.com
- www.1888pressrelease.com
- www.sanepr.com
- www.pressbuzz.com
- www.pressbox.com
- www.pressreleasepoint.com
- www.amazines.com

A savvy PR officer will also distribute news releases to bookmarking sites and social networks.

16.5.3 Social Media News Release

Blogs and other consumer generated media (CGM) are sometimes referred as citizen journalism. The reach and influence of CGM means news releases are often finding their way to the inboxes of content creators. While many journalists are becoming disillusioned with the standard news release format, the news release can be seen as over-hyped corporate speak by time-sensitive and transparency-focused bloggers.

Pitching to bloggers can be a sensitive task, and there are some guidelines outlined in this chapter, but PR firms such as Edelman (www.edelman.com) and Shift Communications (www.shiftcomm.com) have created templates for a

discussion

Journalists usually extract information from a news release and supply commentary when they write an article. How do you think the fact that the news releases are now being read directly by the public affects the news release?



SOCIAL MEDIA PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE, VERSION 1.0

CONTACT INFORMATION:	Client contact Phone #/skype Email IM address Web site	Spokesperson Phone #/skype Email IM address Blog/relevant post	Agency contact Phone #/skype Email IM address Web site
-----------------------------	---	---	---

NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE
Subhead

CORE NEWS FACTS

- Bullet-points preferable

LINK & RSS FEED TO PURPOSE-BUILT DEL.ICIO.US PAGE

The purpose-built del.icio.us page offers hyperlinks (*and PR annotation in “notes” fields*) to relevant historical, trend, market, product & competitive content sources, providing context as-needed, and, on-going updates.

PHOTO
e.g., product picture, exec headshot, etc.

MP3 FILE OR PODCAST LINK
e.g., sound bytes by various stakeholders

GRAPHIC
e.g., product schematic; market size graphs; logos

VIDEO
e.g., brief product demo by in-house expert

MORE MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE BY REQUEST
e.g., “download white paper”

PRE-APPROVED QUOTES FROM CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, ANALYSTS, CUSTOMERS AND/OR PARTNERS

Recommendation: no more than 2 quotes per contact. The PR agency should have additional quotes at-the-ready, “upon request,” for journalists who desire exclusive content. This provides opportunity for Agency to add further value to interested media.

LINKS TO RELEVANT COVERAGE TO-DATE (OPTIONAL)

This empowers journalist to “take a different angle,” etc. These links would also be cross-posted to the custom del.icio.us site.

BOILERPLATE STATEMENTS

RSS FEED TO CLIENT’S NEWS RELEASES

“ADD TO DEL.ICIO.US”

Allows readers to use the release as a standalone portal to this news

TECHNORATI TAGS/“DIGG THIS”

Figure 16.4 An example of a Social Media Press Release.

Social Media News Release (SMNR), designed to communicate facts more clearly and concisely, and to use the tools provided by social media.

This is the outcome of an evolving conversation between PR companies and journalists and bloggers. It is a work in process, and there is plenty being said both for and against this approach, but it is an elegant example of PR firms listening to the conversation, engaging and responding.

16.5.4 Blogging

Writing a blog is one of the best ways for a company to build its own voice in the new world of social media and citizen journalism. Not only do blogs play a role in SEO (with fresh, key phrase rich content creation), they also play a strategically important role in reaching out to customers.

Blogging takes a company right into the heart of the conversation and demonstrates the company's comfort with this communication channel. A blog facilitates regular commentary spoken in the voice of the company and blogging teaches companies how to engage personally with their customers.

16.5.5 Online Press Room

As the Internet increases ease of access to information, an essential part of WebPR is ensuring that pertinent information is easy to access. Making sure journalists, customers and investors are able to find all key company information quickly and easily means that you are able to slip into that conversation that much more easily.

A **Nielsen Norman** study found that when a journalist uses a corporate website to find basic information, they are successful only 73% of the time (Nielsen). Journalists often work to tight deadlines, and having the required information to hand could make the difference between being written about and not. An online press room can ensure a company is able to meet journalists' needs.

An online press room must have:

- **Company history**
- **Key executive biographies**
- **Pertinent background information**
- **Logos and images in a variety of sizes, resolutions (for web and for print) and formats**
- **All news releases**
- **Multimedia gallery (video, audio and visual)**

tip

Go to www.edelman.com/news/ for some examples of the Edelman version in action.

note

For information on blogging, be sure to read the chapter *Social Media Channels*.

- **Contact information**
 - PR representative
 - Company
- **Search function**
- **RSS / email alerts**
- **Tagging capabilities**
- **Information in a variety of formats**

Keeping the information accessible and accurate saves time for both the PR team and for the researcher and demonstrates the company's openness to communication.



Social Media Newsroom Template

Company Logo

Description:
News about company and its role in the XYZ industry

News Company Site Web

Search:

Executive Corner

Links to biography, speaker history, [LinkedIn](#) profile

Links to biography, speaker history, [LinkedIn](#) profile

for updates on executive activity by RSS, e-mail

Media Coverage

Technorati this
Save this
E-mail this

Excerpt and [link](#) to media coverage

Excerpt and [link](#) to media coverage

Excerpt and [link](#) to media coverage

for media coverage updates by RSS, e-mail

PR Contact Information

Contact Name

Click here to request an interview

Tag Cloud

Relevant terms about company, industry, products, executives, speeches and competition. Also, tags related to individual press releases and media coverage

Multimedia Gallery

Previews and links to download embeddable versions of company logo, executive pictures, product shots, podcasts, videos, etc.

News Releases

Meld News + Blog:
Each release hosted on a separate page (permalink). Moderated comments and trackbacks allowed on individual release "micro" sites

Headline, excerpt and [link](#)

Headline, excerpt and [link](#)

Headline, excerpt and [link](#)

for company news updates by RSS, email

del.icio.us Accounts

del.icio.us/company

del.icio.us/industry

del.icio.us/competition

del.icio.us/misc.

Schedule

Upcoming tradeshow appearance(s), link(s)

for company event updates by RSS, email

RSS Feeds (OPML)

Corporate bloggers and vloggers

Pictures

Profiles

Excerpts

What We're Reading...

Blogs

Mainstream media links

or

Figure 16.5 Social Media Newsroom Template.

Pitching to bloggers

Although many journalists are bloggers, bloggers are not journalists. They do not have to answer to their editor or publisher. They generally do not write to pay their bills; instead they tend to write about things that they are passionate about. They measure success in number of comments, trackbacks and traffic.

To pitch effectively to bloggers, you need to understand these subtleties. There are many useful blog posts by bloggers who get pitched to often, that outline guidelines for the PR industry. The effective PR person will take note.

As with journalists, building a relationship is the best way to pitch to a blogger. Remember, journalist or blogger, you are reaching out to an individual.

- Read their blog, and engage.
- Make pitches personal and relevant.
- Provide accurate key information. Be descriptive but concise.
- Do not try to spin a story.
- Show that you are aware of who is talking about you, and who is talking about their blog.
- Be transparent.
- Provide links to images, logos and news releases. Never send large attachments.

In the US, the beauty PR industry has been noticing the power of bloggers, and some of the cosmetics houses send samples and swag (an industry term for gifts) to bloggers as well as journalists (Schaefer 2008).

Journalists are generally restricted in the value of the gift they are allowed to accept, and tend to reveal when reviewed products are free samples. The publishing houses need to maintain an unbiased reputation. Bloggers, however, are self-publishers and can make up their own rules as they go along. Some of them accept lavish gifts in return for coverage – coverage that can ironically appear more authentic as it comes from a blogger and not a journalist.

16.6 tools of the trade

WebPR is about engaging in a conversation, so the essential tools that are required are:

- Tools for listening
- Tools for responding
- Tools for tracking success

RSS feeds tracking mentions of pertinent keywords are the best way to get an overview of mentions of a brand or company. These are outlined in detail in the chapter *Online Reputation Management*.

Responding can take place through the various social media channels such as:

- Blogs
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Forums

Online article directories and news release directories are also crucial to publishing and spreading information. Having a thorough and up to date online news room ensures that relevant information is available.

The most important tool is relationship building. Whether you are a journalist, blogger or consumer, transparent conversations are paving the way for effective public relations.

16.7 webPR: should I or shouldn't I?

There is no question about it, the media landscape has changed and those who need to broadcast messages through new media need to adapt along with it.

The Internet allows for greater distribution and reach of all messages, but it does mean that companies can no longer control these messages in the ways that they used to. Public relations on the web allows companies increased access to what their customers are saying, and a direct channel to respond to that.

There are many new recipients of information, which does require more work from the PR team. As well as building relationships with journalists, bloggers and other generators of content need to be included in your target list. The rules of engagement are changing, and power is increasingly moving from the companies who create messages to those that they need to broadcast it for them.

16.8 summary

PR has moved into a new and exciting era - it has moved online. WebPR is used to enhance brand awareness, exposure and SEO efforts using the various online channels like article directories, news release sites, industry related sites, online newsrooms, blogs, forums and social media sites.

Effective PR is about listening and responding, and the Internet has provided tools to enhance these activities.

Companies can listen to the conversation using ORM tools. Companies should respond by going to the customer conversation, whether that means commenting on blogs or forums or some other means of engagement.

Companies can use the Internet to build their own voice online. Tactics include:

- [Online article syndication](#)
- [News release directories](#)
- [Corporate blogging](#)

WebPR uses the Internet to enhance and update established PR practice. Optimising news releases for both search engines and social media increases online reach, distribution and reputation. A resourceful, accessible and well-managed online press room is crucial.

The Internet means that companies no longer control the conversation. With WebPR, a company can engage in the conversation, and with transparency, influence it.

16.9 the bigger picture

WebPR is an effective link building exercise in a holistic SEO strategy. Content optimised for search engines and then syndicated creates both authority for the originating site as well as backlinks. Optimised news releases can have the same effect, and when picked up by established media publications, backlinks can carry a lot of weight.

PR and ORM go hand in hand; neither can be effective without the other. While ORM listens to the conversation, PR responds to and seeks to create conversation. Too much talking means that a brand can be perceived as an out-of-touch loudmouth.

However, going to the other extreme and spending too much time listening means that the conversation can go in the wrong direction. A balance needs to be achieved to make sure that the conversation is moving forwards.

WebPR complements the social media strategy for a brand. Effective WebPR leverages social media to increase the reach of a company's marketing messages.

16.10 case study: Nokia's Social Media Press Room

Nokia, a leading figure in global telecommunications for over a century, builds quality mobile phones for hundreds of thousands of customers in over 150 countries.

The Finnish mobile giant approached Quirk, through their public relations partner, Fleishman Hillard, tasking the agency with creating a platform which would allow journalists and bloggers access to Nokia news releases and other media files.

Together with this platform, the campaign needed to create added traditional and social media awareness around the happenings within Nokia, as well as its products, both current and upcoming.

Quirk approached the idea head-on, deciding that Nokia needed a Social Media Press Office – a first for Southern Africa and best practice globally.

It was decided that the Press Office should contain rich multimedia content including images and videos along with the basic Nokia news releases and media announcements.

This would reinforce positive branding that Nokia was, and still is, a leader in the mobile market, not just in actual mobile phones, but in content and delivery too. After all, Nokia was an official backer of the .mobi domain in 2006, directly leading to the growth of mobile content.

The team developed the Press Office using a custom content management system (CMS) which allowed Nokia’s PR partner to update content, and the media to subscribe to specific feeds about each service.

Quirk also integrated the solution with Nokia’s international digital asset management systems to ensure that content was always up-to-date and consistent with their global offices. And so NokiaConnectZA was born.

Instead of the closed-door policy of many press rooms, both in the corporate and political world, Nokia decided to have an open platform. This meant that any member of the public, not just journalists or bloggers, could access the platform and not be stonewalled at a login/password page.

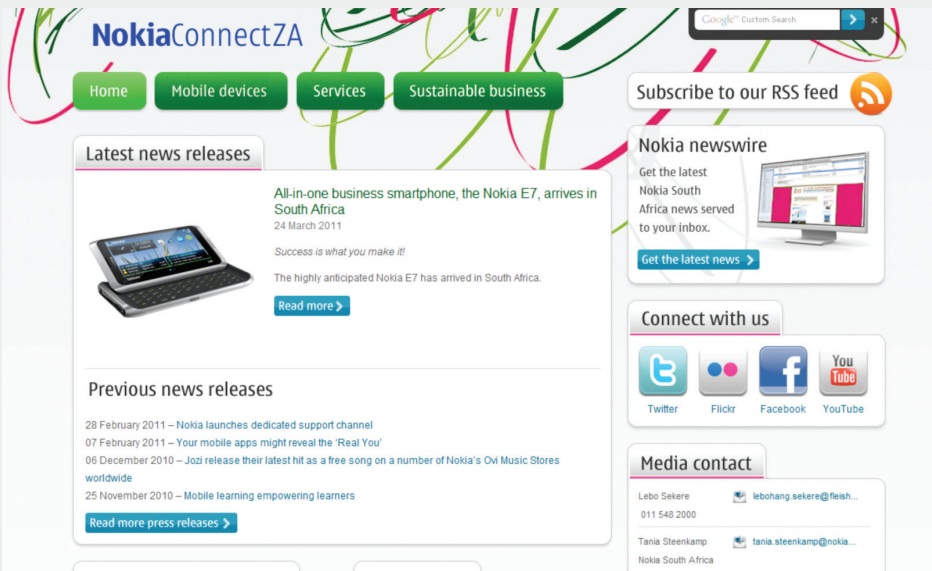


Figure 16.6 The Nokia Press Room.

Nokia in turn received praise from industry bloggers who felt the platform was in line with a more modern PR approach, where information sharing was encouraged, not restricted.

Using the custom CMS, as well as nifty programming, the website pulls feeds from not only Nokia's several international content blogs, but also social spaces. Information from Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and other social platforms is regularly added to NokiaConnectZA.

The screenshot shows two main sections on the NokiaConnectZA website. On the left is the 'Nokia conversations blog' which lists four recent posts: '24 hours with the Nokia X7' (13 April 2011), 'Product Manager Chris Probert talks about the Nokia E6' (13 April 2011), 'Launch: Nokia E6 – business is in hand' (12 April 2011), and 'Launch: Nokia X7 – extreme entertainment' (12 April 2011). Below these posts is a 'Visit blog >' button. On the right is the 'Popular tags' section, which contains a dense list of tags including 'music', 'xpressmusic', 'nokia', 'launch', 'unlimited', 'comes', 'with', 'for', 'n', 'n97', 'search', 'blog', 'win', '8mp', 'nseries', 'devices', 'n86', 'ovi', 'store', 'applications', 'south', 'africa', 'local', 'online', 'streamed', 'ri', 'hanna', 'album', 'rated', 'program', 'exchange', 'charger', 'platform', 'developers', 'maemo', 'qt', 'developer', 'calling', 'all', 'innovators', 'afri', 'doctor', 'messaging', 'email', 'e75', '3g', 'n900', 'booklet', 'wfin', '5530', '5630', '5130', 'bus', 'take', 'recycle', 'back', 'x6', 'comes', 'with', 'music', 'forum', 'global', 'maps', 'navigation', 'free', 'e72', 'qwerty', 'mwc', 'meego', 'everbody', 'haiti', 'hurts', 'skype', 'smartphone', 'symbian', 'sama', 'oscars', '6710', 'navigator', 'lifetime', 'woodmead', 'care', 'centre', 'repairs', 'mini', 'sport', 'football', 'stars', 'e-mail', 'e63', 'n8', 'symbian3', 'pepsi', 'car', 'kit', 'accessories', 'communicator', 'd200', 'ringaz', 'sms', 'service', 'e52', 'nokiamicustore', 'ovistore', 'drm-free', 'ovimail', 'ovimusic', 'ovimusiconlimited', 'mp3', 'ovimaps', 'firefox_compatible', 'mp3_format_tracks', 'mac_compatible', 'safari_compatible', 'ovimusiconlimited', 'nokiae3_touch_and_type', 'ovi_store', 'nokiae8', 'calling_all_innovators_winners', 'nokiae7', 'nokiaworld2010', 'nokiae6', 'rokingthedaiesis', 'rockingthegardens', 'take-back', 'geotag', 'we-recycle', 'apps', 'ovicontacts', '12megapixel', 'rsa', 'hdmi', 'pre-orders', 'free_ovimaps', 'gossip_buzz_app', 'muse_app', 'downloads', '2010', 'mtv_europe_music_wards', 'biffy_dyro_app', 'lady_gaga', 'celebrity_tweets_app', 'foodandtreesforafrica', 'trees', 'recycling_campaign', 'southafrica', 'mobilelearning', 'mtn', 'cellic', 'momaths', 'maskevmillerlongman', 'mxit', 'mobilemaths', 'departmentofeducation', 'safipa', 'e-learning', 'hip', 'mtv', 'ovi_music', 'jozi', 'hop', 'test', 'call', 'mea', 'support', 'e7', 'smartphones'.

Figure 16.7 The use of tags makes it easier to categorise and access information.

The press room was also built to mirror popular social bookmarking websites. All posts on NokiaConnectZA make use of tags ranging from 'applications' to 'Lady Gaga single', allowing for easy information categorisation and retrieval. Just like popular social bookmarking sites Digg!, NokiaConnectZA users can follow tags to other stories or media that they might be interested in.

In the year since NokiaConnectZA launched, a total of 12 078 unique visitors have been logged, while 61 news releases have been added and 16 podcasts uploaded.

The website continues to attract new users, while fresh content is regularly added.

case study questions

1. What role does social media play in WebPR, and do you see this role increasing?
2. What are the benefits of having an 'open' press office?
3. What possible negative ramifications can occur when implementing Social Media aspects into traditional PR?

chapter questions

1. What are the main differences between a traditional news release and a social media news release, and what are the similarities?
2. What is the difference between optimising a news release for search and optimising a news release for social media?
3. How do you think social media has changed the role of a public relations professional?

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further reading

- www.pr-squared.com – the blog from Shift Communications, a PR firm that is leading the way in social media
- www.edelman.com/speak_up/blog/ - a blog from Richard Edelman of Edelman PR – see how a large player in the industry tackles the changing world of PR
- notetaker.typepad.com/cgm/ - Pete Blackshaw's thoughts on all things ORM, CGM and PR are essential reading for any online marketer

What's inside: An **introduction** to Online Reputation Management and the **key terms and concepts** you will need for this chapter. We look at how 'Dell Hell' showed the influence a consumer can have on a brand and **how it works**. We then explore **listening to the conversation**, tracking tools to do this and **when to respond**. We also cover tips on how to maximise and **evolve the business** and how to **recover from an online brand attack**. We then **summarise** the key message before ending off with how it all fits together through **the bigger picture** and a **case study**.

17.1 introduction

"I repeat: Today we're in an all-out war for reputation. Our companies are battling – to an unprecedented extent – for our most vital assets: our own identities." - Abbott chairman and CEO Miles D. White

Online conversations are taking place all the time: about politics, about Britney Spears, about a pet dog, about companies, about just about anything. People everywhere are reading and listening to the press, as well as engaging in and creating blogs, videos, mashups and more. Brand stakeholders (i.e. customers) are in a position to use the Internet to research the answers to those burning questions about a brand or a product. Consumer generated media (CGM) sits at the heart of this movement and it's really big news for any company or personality today. Simply put: stakeholders are possibly more powerful now than they have ever been!

The social media chapters have detailed the tools of social media and the importance of word of mouth when it comes to building successful digital marketing campaigns. Consumers trust each other and brands are being made or destroyed based on what stakeholders feel towards them. In the words of James Smith, CEO of Aurora Food, "Brands don't die, people kill them!" – a sobering thought indeed.

The use of social media has equipped consumers with a voice and a platform, and the ability to amplify their views and truly inform their decision making. The connected nature of the Internet makes these views easy to share, and the accessibility of social media tools makes it easy for other consumers to find these views, and respond and build on them. All of this contributes to the perception of the brand.

This must all be considered with the already low levels of trust towards brands and rising volumes of conversation taking place about them online. Clay Shirkey presents this well and argues that it is a numbers game – brands can simply no longer compete with the sheer volume of stakeholder-driven conversation taking place online. In the words of the McKinsey Quarterly "brands now only control 66% of their brand touch points". The world of reputation management surely has changed from the paper based spin-doctory of the late 20th century. A simple search for your <brand name> +complaints (for example *apple +complaints*) is likely to demonstrate exactly how deep and powerful this movement is – with websites such as TripAdvisor boasting that 88% of visitors' purchasing decisions are influenced based on reviews seen on their site.

Progressive brands have cottoned onto this enormously powerful (and immediate) data source which exists online. When used correctly, online conversation is actively assisting in guiding the brand on both strategies

and tactics. It aids in creating a marketing environment built on trust and transparency, not inflated perceptions and lies.

A company's reputation has been shown to make a difference to its bottom line.

Prioritising the role of stakeholders in their success and engaging with their consumers, companies who appear honest and transparent and who listen to their consumers benefit from a growing fan base of loyal customers who can then turn into passionate spokespeople and brand ambassadors. Companies who ignore the voices of their customers will see diminishing loyalty, and a growing resentment among the vocal online consumers.

Companies, and individuals, need to listen to what is being said about them, and learn how to respond to and engage with their consumers in this world of shifting power.

17.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Brand promise	A brand promise is an explicit or implicit agreement between a business and a stakeholder used to measure expectation. For example: Apple's promise may be to provide devices which are good to look at and easy to use.
Consumer Generated Media (CGM)	Information that is published online by individuals. This refers to videos, photos, blogs, audio and more. It is also referred to as social media.
Dell Hell	The term used by Jeff Jarvis when his Dell computer malfunctioned, and he had a hard time getting appropriate customer service.
Feed reader	An RSS aggregator that lets you view all your RSS feeds in one place.
Flog	A fake blog is known as a flog. For example when a company will start a blog but pretend it is run by independent consumers.
Keyword	In online reputation management, a keyword is a term that is used when searching the Internet for mentions.
Key performance indicator (KPI)	A metric that shows whether a website is achieving its objectives.
Mentions	In online reputation management, mentions refer to the instances when a selected brand, company or staff members are talked about online, usually by clients or consumers.
Online reputation	The aggregation of sentiment from mentions of an entity online will give its online reputation.

Online reputation management (ORM)	Understanding and influencing the perception of an entity online.
Really simple syndication (RSS)	RSS allows you to receive/ syndicate this information without requiring you to constantly open new pages in your browser.
Search engine results page (SERP)	What is seen on a search engine when a search is performed.
Stakeholder	A stakeholder is anybody who has something to gain from influencing the business/individual in a particular way. This typically includes consumers, employees, journalists etc.

17.3 Dell Hell

17.3.1 What Can Happen When a Company Refuses to Listen

“Dell Hell” was a term coined by influential blogger Jeff Jarvis as he recounted the failure of his Dell computer and the failure of Dell customer service. His blog posts resonated with many readers who added their own comments of misery at the hands of Dell customer service. These posts caused the first popular study of the influence of blogs on brands, and have come to be definitive of the effects of a brand not listening.

The archives of all posts on Jeff Jarvis’ blog related to this can be found by going to http://www.buzzmachine.com/archives/cat_dell.html.

The series of posts began on 21 June 2005, in a post that has elicited over 250 comments to date. The laptop Jeff Jarvis had just bought was clearly not functioning as it should. What irked him even further, though, was that he had “paid a fortune for the four-year, in-home service” yet he was told by Dell that if they sent someone to his home to assist him, the person would not have the parts necessary to fix his machine. The post ends:

“DELL SUCKS. DELL LIES. Put that in your Google and smoke it, Dell.”

Jeff Jarvis catalogued the repeated failings of Dell customer service, from emails sent to him that used the wrong name, to many time-inefficient diagnostic tests Dell wanted him to carry out, and still after much to-ing and fro-ing he had a computer that did not work and a warranty that seemed useless. His posts continued to attract many comments, and he often spoke directly to Dell in his blog, exhorting them to listen and to respond.

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Apple - MacBook

The new **MacBook** features the latest Intel Core 2 Duo processor, larger hard drives, and up to 2GB of memory standard. And the best part: **MacBook** still ...

www.apple.com/macbook/ - 17k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

Apple - MacBook Pro

With the latest Intel processor, a bigger hard drive, more memory, and even more innovative features, the new **MacBook Pro** has all the power, performance and ...

www.apple.com/macbookpro/ - 18k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[More results from www.apple.com »](#)

MacBook - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The original **MacBook** was released on May 16, 2006, and utilized the Intel Core Duo processor and 945GM chipset, with Intel's GMA950 integrated graphics on a ...
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MacBook - 88k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)



Macbook Destruction

When Apple refused to honor my warranty, I destroyed my ...

2 min 37 sec - ★★★★★

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHbrQqrgVgg



YouTube - MacBook

2 GHz, 2 GB RAM **MacBook**, showing the speed of the build in ...

6 min - ★★★★★

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxdK-bZQ698

MacBook - Appled defects

The **MacBook** is a line of consumer Macintosh laptop computers developed and marketed by Apple Computer. Introduced on May 16, 2006[1] to immediate ...

www.appled defects.com/wiki/index.php?title=MacBook - 75k -

[Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

The Apple Store (U.S.) - MacBook

The 2.4GHz **MacBook** models now include 2GB of memory standard — perfect for ... Every **MacBook** has a larger hard drive, up to 250GB, to store growing media ...

store.apple.com/.../WebObjects/AppleStore.woa/

wa/RSLLID?nmm=browse&node=home/shop_mac/family/macbook - 45k -

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Amazon.com: Apple MacBook MB062LL/B 13.3" Laptop (2.2 GHz Intel ...

Amazon.com: Apple **MacBook** MB062LL/B 13.3" Laptop (2.2 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo Processor, 1 GB RAM, 120 GB Hard Drive, 8x SuperDrive) White: Computers & PC ...

www.amazon.com/Apple-MacBook-MB062LL-Processor-SuperDrive/dp/B000RG0RFA - 287k

- [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

Posts from the Macbook Category at The Unofficial Apple Weblog (TUAW)

If you already own a **MacBook** or **MacBook Pro**, you can send it to ExperCom's Logan, Utah office and have your hard drive replaced with a 60GB (\$599) or 120GB ...

www.tuaw.com/category/macbook/ - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

MacBook - Gizmodo

Perhaps **MacBook** Shank is more apt; or the **MacBook** Shiv; or even something cross-promotional, like the Ginsu Mac. Regardless, we've seen this thing cut bread ...

gizmodo.com/gadgets/macbook/ - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

Searches related to: macbook

[macbook review](#)

[macbook vs macbook pro](#)

[macbook coupon](#)

Figure 17.1 A search for “Macbook” shows that there are a lot of entries on the SERP that Apple does not control.

User Generated Content

User Generated Content

Eventually, he worked out the email address of Dell’s Chief Marketing Officer and Vice President for US Consumer Business and sent him an email detailing the ongoing saga that was not being resolved. Predictably, Jeff Jarvis received a phone call, and eventually the matter was resolved when he obtained a refund in July 2005.

Analysts noted the influence of social media and a brand’s online reputation, and this showed in the falling consumer confidence in Dell. It may not be directly related to one blogger, and Dell admitted to neglecting customer service for some time, but “in the midst of this silicon opera, Dell’s customer satisfaction rating, market share, and share price in the US all shrank” (Jarvis, 2005).



Figure 17.2 A graph illustrating the effect a reputation crisis can have on the bottom line.

Today, Dell has come a long way. Dell has launched Dell IdeaStorm (www.dellideastorm.com), where Dell customers and enthusiasts can communicate with the company. Crucially, customers can, and do, tell Dell what features they want in a laptop, and Dell then feeds this into its product development.

17.4 how it works

Online reputation management uses digital means to monitor and analyse a brand’s reputation online, and engage in digital conversation so as to influence its reputation and gain strategic insights to guide business decision making. The aim is to improve stakeholder experience with the brand resulting in trust, loyalty in the brand, and sustainable business growth.

On the web, reputation matters. Many communities have their own reputation management for members, such as eBay, Digg and Reddit. This is based on the need for individuals interacting in those communities to know what content they should and shouldn't trust. In these cases feedback is given by other community members, and affects the success of that member's ability to transact within the community. Generally, participation, engagement and response are all used to rate a member's reputation.

Websites which place an emphasis on the reviews of the community, such as IMDB.com for movies or Amazon.com for books, have algorithms which determine their most trusted reviewers, and they base some of their rankings on the opinions of that part of their community.

When shifting to the greater community of the Internet, participation, delivery on promises and appropriateness of response remain key factors in determining an organisation's reputation.

17.4.1 Step 1: Monitor – Listen to the Conversation

Traditional focus groups can take a lot of time and money. Using the world's largest, real-time focus group (the Internet) is often faster and cheaper. It's all out there, connected via hyperlinks; full of content, images and movies...

Keywords – the foundation to categorising and indexing the web – make it relatively simple (though possibly time-consuming) to track conversations taking place online manually. Customers are not using channels designated by a company to talk about that organisation, but the good news is that the Internet makes it easy for a company to identify and use the channels that customers have selected.

ORM Keywords

ORM allows a company to track mentions of itself, its staff, its products, its industry and its competitors. In fact, the tools allow for tracking of anything; it comes down to deciding what is relevant.

Typically, searches include the following main focus areas:

Company

- Brand name
- Key products
- Key personnel (names, job titles, etc)
- Key campaigns and activities

Industry

- Conferences
- Patents
- News

Competitors

- Brand names
- Product launches
- Website updates
- Job vacancies
- Key people

When selecting keywords, there are essentially four different types of searches which can be performed. Each modifies the specific type of data collected and aims to improve the quality and depth of the data which is found by an ORM tool.

The four operators are:

- **Broad match** – i.e. *Apple Computers*. This is when any of or all words must be found in the mention for that result to be found by the ORM tool.
- **Direct match** – i.e. *"Apple Computers"* This is denoted by quotation marks and dictates that the ORM tool should only find mentions where the phrase appears complete and in order in the content.
- **Inclusive match** – i.e. *Apple +computers*. This is denoted by an addition sign directly before a word or phrase. This will direct an ORM tool to search for any mention which contains both *Apple* AND *Computers* although not necessarily in that order.
- **Exclusive match** - i.e. *Apple -fruit*. This is denoted by a subtraction sign directly before a word or phrase. This will instruct an ORM tool to include only mentions which contain the first word or phrase but not when the second word is also in the same mention.

note

If you want to try this out then go to your favourite search engine and see if you can identify some keywords for your business/personal brand.

Combinations of these four types of searches (operators) can be used to improve accuracy.

For example: *"Apple Computers" + "steve jobs" -fruit*.

Applying this theory to the groupings above, some keywords for Apple used might be:

Company

- "Apple computers"
- "www.apple.com"
- Apple +Macbook, "iPod nano", "Macbook Air", "iTunes" +music -radio
- "Steve Jobs"

Industry

- "Consumer Electronics Show" + "Las Vegas"
- "CEBIT"

Competitors

- Microsoft
- Micro soft

It is also important to track common misspellings, all related companies and all related websites (as was done for competitors above).

Tracking the names of people key to a company can highlight potential brand attacks, or can demonstrate new areas of outreach for a company.

Brand names, employee names, product names and even competitor names are not unique. To save yourself from monitoring too much, identify keywords which will indicate that a post has nothing to do with your company, and exclusive match that keyword in your searches.

For example, "apple" could refer to a consumer electronics company, or it could appear in a post about the health benefits of fruit. Finding keywords that will indicate context can help to save time. So, you could exclusive match words like "fruit", "tasty" and "granny smith".

How to track: CGM and Search

Thankfully, ORM does not entail hourly searches on your favourite search engine to see what conversations are taking place online. There are a number of search engines that allow for narrowing a search to particular media or industries. RSS means that these results can be updated regularly and kept conveniently in one place.

There are also great paid for services such as BrandsEye which provides full monitoring of the Internet.

Monitoring all mentions means that the following needs to be tracked:

- Blogs
- Twitter
- News
- Forums
- Comment boards
- Photos
- Videos
- Job Listings
- Events
- Patents
- Website changes
- and more!

note

Remember RSS from the social media chapter? It means that you can keep track of everything in one central place.

There are a number of different tools that monitor these areas, and supply the results via email alerts or RSS feeds. Below are some free tools that are available.

Google has several bespoke search services, and periodically adds more to the list. With the services below, an RSS feed is available for the search (Google Alerts sends weekly or daily emails with updates), so that all updates can be available through a feed reader.

- **Google Alerts:** www.google.com/alerts
 - » Google Alerts will send an email when the keyword is used in either a credible news item or a blog post.
- **Google News:** news.google.com
 - » Google News searches all news items for mentions of a keyword.
- **Google Blog Search:** blogsearch.google.com
 - » Google Blog Search searches all blog posts for mentions of a keyword.
- **Google Patent Search:** www.google.com/patents
 - » Google Patent Search allows you to keep track of all filings related to an industry, and searches can be done to see if there are patent filings which might infringe on other patents.
- **Google Video Search:** video.google.com/videosearch
 - » Video Search relies on the data that has been added to describe a video, and will return results based on keyword matches.

There are several search engines which focus solely on tracking blogs, news and other social media, and can provide trends for searches. As well as providing regular updates of new postings, these search engines can also provide an overview over a certain period of time.

- **Blogpulse:** www.blogpulse.com
 - » Blogpulse tracks conversations and trends and supplies an RSS feed for updates.
- **Technorati:** www.technorati.com
 - » Technorati tracks blogs and tagged social media.

Keeping track of blogposts is one thing, but mentions of a company can also appear in blog comments and on forum postings. The following two services assist in monitoring comments and forums.

- **Boardtracker:** www.boardtracker.com
 - » Boardtracker monitors popular forums and provides alerts via SMS for keywords mentioned in a thread.
- **Co.mments:** co.mments.com
 - » RSS alerts can be created for mentions of a keyword in the comments of blogposts.

Yahoo! has a number of Social Media companies under its umbrella, and most provide the opportunity to monitor mentions via RSS.

- **Flickr:** www.flickr.com/search
 - » RSS updates for searches on a particular keyword will reveal when a brand name has been used in tagging a photo.
- **Yahoo! Upcoming:** upcoming.yahoo.com
 - » Yahoo!'s Upcoming will alert you via RSS for any upcoming events related to the keyword you have selected.
- **Del.icio.us:** del.icio.us
 - » An RSS feed can be created for URLs tagged with keywords, or for new bookmarking of a URL.
- **Yahoo! Pipes:** pipes.yahoo.com/pipes
 - » Yahoo! Pipes allows anyone to set up a custom buzz monitoring tool with bespoke filters.

There might be websites that a company would like to monitor for keyword mentions that do not offer RSS feeds. Using a service such as Rollyo (www.rollyo.com) allows the creation of a custom search engine which will search those specific sites only.

Listening is the first step to getting involved in the conversation surrounding a company. Using search tools and RSS feeds means that information can be accessed quickly and in one place, without the need to visit hundreds of websites.

17.4.2 Step 2: Measure – Learn, Understand, Evolve

As a marketer, the first step in looking at who is saying what is to take stock of the messages being sent by your own company. This includes: all websites and domains owned by a company, all blogs maintained by employees (whether company blogs or personal blogs) and all blogs maintained by ex-employees. An audit should give an idea of the content that is available to the public and what that content is saying.

With regular RSS updates (or the use of an ORM tool) declaring that selected keywords have been used in some form of social media, a growing list is being created of mentions surrounding a brand. Now what?

Even in the democratised world of the Internet, not all mentions are equal. They vary in terms of positivity or negativity, influence and impact. Not all mentions require action from a company. Some require drastic measures to be taken. But all, no matter how quiet or how loud, should be used to learn what

stakeholders believe, understand how they arrived at that belief and evolve activities to improve the success of activities constantly.

Whether a post is positive, negative or indifferent can be quickly assessed by reading it. Influence can be a little harder to establish.

Indicators of influence, such as traffic, links and subscriber numbers, can all assist in assessing the influence of a blog. There are also services such as Blog Influence (www.bloginfluence.net) and Social Meter (www.socialmeter.com) which will show the audience and reach for an entered URL. There is also an increasing amount of specific social network influence tools available such as Klout (www.klout.com) or Twitalyzer (www.twitalyzer.com). However, all statements, particularly inflammatory ones, should still be monitored. Their influence may be low but sensationalised content often has a high impact.

Influence can also assist in establishing the credibility of the author. Factors which can indicate credibility include the size of the blog’s audience, the frequency of posts, the age of the blog, and the quality and regularity of engagement (comments, likes, retweets etc).

The source should also be looked at: is the mention a news item or a comment on a photo from a consumer’s holiday?

To be able to monitor reputation over time, it can be a good idea to aggregate the information into a spreadsheet or database along with the factors mentioned above. Most ORM tools do, however, provide this functionality by default. It is necessary to determine what is important to the reputation of the company you are monitoring, and perhaps adapt factors accordingly.

Your database might look something like this:

URL of mention	Praise, complaint, neutral	Source	Credibility	Influence	Action
www.joesoapblog.com/ihatethisbrand	Complaint	Blog post	Very credible, well-respected author.	Widely read	Post public comment acknowledging mistake and proposing rectification.
www.ryanthewriter.wordpress.com	Praise	Video blog	Not credible or trusted, first blog post on website.	Blog recently created, unlikely to have wide readership.	Promote blog, thank the user for praise, or ignore the post.

Figure 17.3 A graph illustrating how a reputation crisis can impact your bottom line.

There are also a number of paid for services on the market that will assist in monitoring, aggregating this information and identifying business key performance indicators (KPI) to ensure you are always on-top of your reputation.

BrandsEye (www.brandseye.com), an ORM service launched in 2008, does exactly that.

It tracks an estimated 35 billion websites for mentions, and allows users to customise reporting and data segmentation to better track relevant terms.

note
 BrandsEye uses the mentions to generate a reputation score. The reputation score is based on an algorithm that uses 24 factors, including the number and frequency of mentions, the sentiment of the mention and the influence of the mention to arrive at its outcomes.

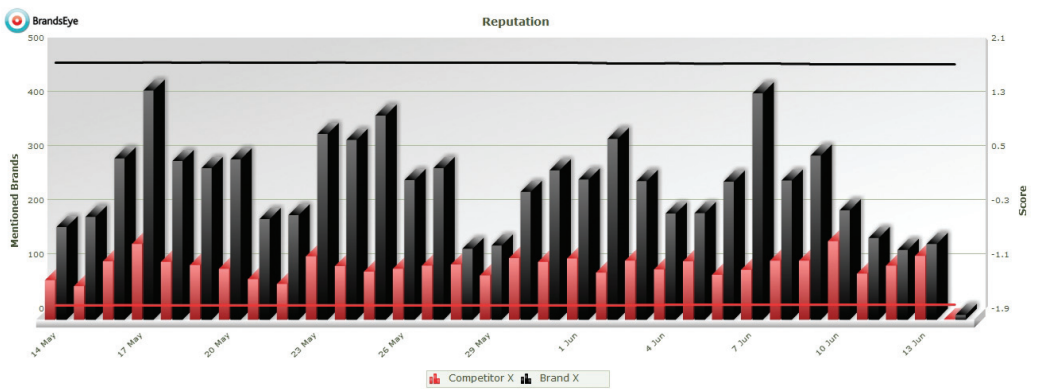


Figure 17.4 An example of a reputation graph.

17.4.3 Step 3: Managing – Dealing with Opportunities and Threats

The best way to show you are listening is, well, the same as with a normal conversation. Comment when it’s appropriate, listen with interest, be polite, respectful and add value wherever possible. Online is much the same but there are many channels available to companies to become an active participant in the conversation.

Brands which are most successful with ORM are constantly on the lookout for opportunities with which to propel their brand, and are keeping their eyes peeled for risks which may threaten their reputation. In both situations, the power sits in how the brand responds. This response can range from a direct CGM engagement to a full new communications/brand/marketing campaign. Ultimately it depends on how powerful the opportunity or risk is.

When to talk (and when not to):

When everything being said is nice?

A fantastic position to be in is that every possible mention that includes your company, its employees and products, is overwhelmingly positive. Well done. However, that does not mean that there is nothing to do. Stakeholders are being positive about the brand because their expectation is being exceeded. Unfortunately expectations change.

Brands that constantly exceed expectations will see the expectations of stakeholders change to meet this new norm. Brands need to stay on their toes and constantly be on the lookout for new and innovative ways to meet and develop their brand promise. That said, during this time the brand must do everything in its power to drive high volumes of conversation. This conversation will typically carry some or all of the sentiments associated with the brand.

What if everything being said is neutral?

Then it sounds like the company is very boring – not a good way to get attention. As Seth Godin (www.sethgodin.com) puts it, “safe is risky”. If a company is playing it so safe that no one can be bothered to either send praise or criticism its way, it’s in danger of being forgotten. The next step is no one talking about the company at all.

What if negative things are being said?

Negative statements should be understood as broken brand promises. There is underperformance on expectation, and it must be dealt with as a matter of high priority. During this period, brands need to be very careful not to stir up any more conversation than is absolutely necessary. That said, it’s certainly not all doom and gloom. If the conversation is broadly negative, it is normally because there is some underlying problem and this information provides the business with focus to resolve it.

Complaints are from stakeholders who have had dealings with a company which hasn’t met their expectations. By complaining, this customer is, often unwittingly, giving the company the opportunity to make things right, and is probably indicating where the company can improve. Usually, the skilled customer service department of a company should deal with these. They should also share insights with the business strategy department so the underlying problems can be prioritised and resolved.

If a complaint is online, the resolution should be there as well, although you can try to have it taken offline first. Even though the customer service will likely take place either over email or by phone, posting a personalised comment in a blog post, for example, will demonstrate to the community that the company, listens, responds and serves the critical objective of actually resolving the underlying issues.

Criticism need not necessarily come from customers, but it is important to be aware of it. If a criticism involves false information, it should be corrected. And if the criticism is true, then it should be dealt with as such.

Responding

Responding involves recognising that consumers hold the upperhand in the relationship. They are better trusted, there are more of them and in most cases, the barriers to exit from a brand are relatively low. As such they dictate the channels of communication. An organisation needs to go to the consumer, not the other way around. Ignoring this will result in the business losing customers because they not willing to truly engage.

In South Africa, MWEB Guy is the name of a MWEB representative who monitors Facebook and Twitter and resolves complaints and queries as well as offering assistance. Instead of directing customers to an FAQ section on a MWEB site, MWEB has followed their consumers to the channel that the consumers prefer.

Not only does MWEB resolve questions online, but they also use it to provide key information that consumers desire.

tip
 Visit <http://www.facebook.com/FreeTheWebSA> to see how MWEB is using the channel to interact with customers.



Figure 17.5 Responding to comments is an important part of community management.

If you are responding to a blogpost, find the writer's contact details on the blog and email her directly. At a last resort, use the comments to make contact with the blogger.

When responding, be transparent, honest and treat the person as you yourself would like to be treated. At all times, remember that you are engaged in conversation, not a dictation. Finally, remember that online, evidence is forever so try keeping it to a minimum.

17.4.4 Step 4: Maximise – Evolve the Business!

So, you are monitoring the conversation, you are measuring it, refining your successes and actively managing perception. Good job! However, you can still do more with the data. The final, and ongoing, step of ORM is the process of using the data to help make statistically supported decisions about the future. It's about using the information that you have recorded and then asking specific questions of it. These could range all the way from the most basic such as "Which is the best day to launch a product?" all the way through to identifying business innovation opportunities and threats.

The more data one has, the bigger decisions one can make. By using online conversation as a source of data means that results are returned in near real-time. This empowers a brand to make decisions more quickly and with more information so they can keep the business evolving and narrow the gap between business offering and stakeholder expectation.

17.5 ten rules to recover from an online brand attack

These 10 rules to recovery should provide a practical approach for brands facing an online threat.

1. Humility

Before you can recover from an online brand attack you have to be aware that your brand can be attacked - no matter how big it is or how untouchable it may seem.

2. Listen

Once you have a clear understanding of the scope of the possible effects of an online attack and are committed to maintaining a good reputation online, you're halfway there. Next you've got to understand how the process of consumer complaints has evolved. Use this understanding to guide your actions.

3. Act immediately!

One of the easiest ways to solve the majority of brand attacks is to respond quickly. A brand that shows it is listening and does indeed care will go far when it comes to ensuring a solid online reputation. A conscious reaction is the only way forward - acknowledging what has been said and reacting accordingly.

4. If what they're saying is false...

If the mention of your brand is factually incorrect, in a friendly tone, send the person evidence that they are wrong, ask for removal or retraction of the entry, and offer to keep them informed of future news. If no action is taken by the blog author, then add a comment.

5. If what they're saying is true...

If it is true, learn from the "Dell Hell" phenomenon. If the mention is negative but true then send your side of the story and try as hard as you can to take it offline.

6. Keep the negative pages out of the search engines

Keeping more people from reading negative things about your brand is imperative. What you can do is knock them off the first page of the results with basic SEO topped with some social media page setups such as Facebook and Twitter or blog posts. Keep adding pages and links until you've forced the offending pages out of sight.

7. Maintain communication

If you aren't an active member of the online community, it tends to be a little harder to recover from an online attack. If your company doesn't have a blog, start one. Participate in industry forums and chat rooms. Build genuine credibility as a member of these conversations and you'll find that people will have more respect for you and your brand.

8. Engage in the conversation

Keep your brand in the face of consumers by engaging in the conversation. This could be done by making use of blogs, communicating with customers and being as open and honest as possible. Engaging in, and leading, the conversation allows you to build an authentic voice. If a crisis hits, you will be well placed to respond in a way that is authentic.

9. Care

If you truly care what your customers think then most of this will come naturally. That's all people want. They give you their money, they just want some good service and respect in return.

10. Be prepared

No brand is immune from an online brand attack. The best brands have

note

Apple came in for heavy criticism from fans when it dropped the price of the iPhone from \$599 to \$399 just two months after it launched. Steve Jobs from Apple responded within days with a candid open letter, and a \$100 voucher for customers who had bought the more expensive phone. You can read his letter at www.apple.com/hotnews/openiphoneletter

strategies in place to immediately identify a reputation crisis and respond to it quickly enough to stop the negative word of mouth spreading.

If all else fails, apologise and move on. Bottom line - by making bloggers familiar with your voice, you will be better placed to respond to criticism. Consumers can spot last-minute corporate fire-fighting - they should know and trust your voice already.

17.6 summary

Conversations are taking place all the time on the Internet, and it is crucial for companies to be aware of what is being said about them. Customers are now dictating the channels of communication, and companies that cannot engage with their consumers in this way stand to lose them.

ORM is about using the tools of the Internet, the same tools that customers are using, to monitor, analyse, influence the conversation and gain business insight. Companies need to learn to listen and engage.

There are many free and paid for tools available for monitoring online conversations, and with most it is easy to set up custom RSS feeds that will update with any new mentions. Mentions need to be analysed for sentiment, credibility, influence and source, and appropriate action to be taken.

Responses should be swift, factual, transparent and honest. The best way for a company to influence the conversation is to be involved in it through the tools of social media.

ORM can help a company to gain an inherent understanding of how consumers perceive and interact with their brand, and thus can provide a platform for planning marketing campaigns.

17.7 the bigger picture

ORM monitors all mentions of a brand, and should guide a brand in using social media to communicate. It can help to identify hotspots for viral word of mouth marketing, and should be used to ensure that that word of mouth is positive.

WebPR works hand in hand with ORM. ORM tools are used to listen, and WebPR helps a company to respond and engage.

ORM can also identify new sources for possible link growth for an SEO strategy. Every mention can be used to build links, and to report on the links obtained.

ORM tools can help to identify what keywords and key phrases to target (and which are being targeted by a company's competitors).

ORM should also be used for determining the success of any marketing campaign that is not directly related to sales. It can show growing brand recognition as well as consumer sentiment.

17.8 case study: Woolworths & Yuppiefchef raise R100 000 for charity

Woolworths is an upmarket retail chain which sells a variety of products ranging from food and wine to clothing and cosmetics. It has a long-standing reputation of being a retail leader within the South African market, known for high-quality consumer products of a consistent nature. Yuppiefchef is an online premium kitchen tool store which sells leading international products, delivering them to the customer's doorstep. Previously the two brands had never interacted in a formal capacity.



Figure 17.6 In-store advertising for the Woolies Lovebirds Campaign.

As part of their online Valentine's Day campaign, Woolworths started the "Woolies Lovebirds Competition". To enter, one had to register online and tweet their valentine, standing a chance at winning amazing prizes.

However, an error was made in all their national campaign signage. A single, yet vital letter was omitted.

When the national network of posters was published the URL read: www.woolieslovebird.co.za (excluding the "s"). The domain was registered as: www.woolieslovebirds.co.za. This is where Yuppiefchef took advantage of an error, turning what could have been a campaign setback into something the market had never before seen.

When Yuppiechef realised the oversight it registered the domain on the posters (without the “s”) and held Woolworths for ransom. The Yuppiechef team put together a ransom note, demanding Woolworths match every rand donated by fans between a set period to Soil For Life. Yuppiechef also kindly capped the amount at R5000.



Figure 17.6 The ransom letter sent by YuppieChef.

The Social Media team at Woolworths went to the extent of increasing the ransom money to R7500 and running a Twitter campaign encouraging sponsorship for the charity: “Our lovebirds have been held for ransom! Help us get them back, donate now!”

The result was overwhelming. Several corporate brands, media members and the general public all contributed, raising R100 000 just before the deadline. Woolworths was able to avoid a major reputation crisis via speedy response and engagement. Woolworths was also commended by business – and the public – for their response to the website ‘hijacking’. Instead of threatening legal action, the brand took the next step by upping the donated amount. Woolworths was able to turn what could have been a failed campaign into a massive PR boost.

case study questions

1. What do you think would have happened if Woolworths had ignored the ransom note and re-launched the campaign?
2. Do you think the PR boost gained from the ransom campaign was better than what Woolworths would have gained from the original Valentine's campaign? Why so?
3. Why would some brands not engage with smaller, lesser known companies?

chapter questions

1. When dealing with complaints or criticism, why should a company try to take them offline first?
2. How do you think a company can encourage customers to use established customer service channels as opposed to social media, and what are the benefits of doing so?
3. Choose a company, and use at least one of the services listed in the chapter to gain an overview of its online reputation. Find a positive mention, a neutral and a negative mention, and determine the influence of each. What action would you recommend to each?
4. Vodacom has a representative on the forum www.mybroadband.co.za. Visit the forum and consider the style the representative, Vodacom3G, uses when posting. Does it sound corporate, or like an individual? What is the effect of the style that the poster uses?

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further reading

- www.brandseye.com/blog - the blog from Brandseye
- www.gottaquirk.com/blog/0/18 - posts from Quirk on ORM on their blog, Gottaquirk, highlighting real life ORM
- www.marketingpilgrim.com/category/reputation-management - insights from Andy Beal and others at Marketing Pilgrim on ORM, including how tos and tools
- <http://notetaker.typepad.com/cgm/> - Pete Blackshaw provides insights on ORM, social media and WebPR

What's inside: The **key terms and concepts** required for understanding mobile engagement. We then include an introduction to marketing through **SMS, MMS, USSD, mobile display networks** and **augmented reality**. We explore **mobile analytics** and methods for measuring your mobile marketing efforts.

18.1 introduction

The mobile phone is an important device to consider in any marketing strategy. Mobile phones are always carried and always on: a potent combination for any marketer. While the *Mobile Development* chapter focused on developing websites and applications for mobile devices, this chapter looks at the ways in which we can use a mobile phone as part of an engagement plan.

The mobile phone is a very personal device, meaning that marketing communications need careful planning. Campaigns can be extremely successful, but care needs to be taken to ensure that they are not invasive.

The key to a successful campaign? Understanding your audience.

Mobile engagement can refer to using the mobile phone’s communication features as part of an engagement strategy, or it can refer to driving traffic to your mobile websites and applications. This chapter will look at tactics that apply to both categories.

18.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
3G	Third Generation of mobile communications systems. 3G networks enable network operators to offer users a wider range of more advanced services while achieving greater network capacity.
Applications	Software which in this case is developed specifically for smartphones and other mobile phones. Also known as apps.
Augmented reality	A variation of virtual reality which takes computer graphics and superimposes them into “reality”—the physical space around the person operating an AR device. These graphics can be 3D images or simply information tags about a location.
Bluetooth	A short distance wireless transfer protocol for connecting devices.
Common Short Codes (CSC)	Common Short Codes. Special numbers or codes that can be used to address SMS and MMS messages from mobile phones or fixed phones, usually to get something in return.
Display Network	These are publishing networks for marketers, allowing them to pay for adverts aimed at the network’s already existing customer group in a variety of ways.
Geo-targeting	Used to allow you to see where your visitors are geographically and to give them specific information relevant to their location.

Multimedia Message Service (MMS)	An extension on SMS, allows picture, sound or low quality videos to be sent on a wireless network.
QR Code	Also known as a 2D Barcode. These are scannable barcodes which can be read by certain mobile applications (by taking a photo of the barcode). They contain information such as a URL.
Short Message Service (SMS)	Text messages that can be sent to mobile phones from the Internet or from other mobile devices.
Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)	Works on all existing GSM phones. Provides session-based communication, enabling a variety of applications.
Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)	A technical set of communication standards for the way wireless devices (like mobile phones) connect with the Internet.
Wireless	The transfer of information from one device to another over a distance without the use of wires.

18.3 how it works

18.3.1 Mobile for Engagement

The mobile phone is sometimes overlooked as an engaging marketing tool, for both simple and complex campaigns. Just as the Internet provides a myriad of options as a marketing, advertising, and distribution channel, so too can the mobile phone. There are a number of technologies available to engage with a mobile audience.

However, no other delivery system requires such a detailed understanding of the target audience. Issues of privacy, convenience and usability are all important aspects of mobile engagement. Because the mobile phone is so personal and offers such a targeted entry into a consumer's day to day life, these issues are more prominent.

Some of the most important messaging and information platforms available to mobile marketers are SMS, MMS, USSD and bluetooth/wireless as well as the capabilities of the data channels which deliver these services. Newer mobile technology, such as mobile applications, QR Codes, augmented reality and geo-targeting provide marketers with further ways of engaging with a mobile audience.

As mobile phones become increasingly integrated with our daily lives, social mobile networking and display networks for display advertising become more and more important.

That said, not every mobile phone user will be able, or willing, to partake in an advanced campaign. This reinforces the notion that mobile campaigns need to be carefully tailored to users.

18.4 marketing using the phone's features

Being a communication device, there are many features built into the mobile phone that can form a part of your marketing campaigns. In this section we outline what these are and some options for how they can be used.

18.4.1 SMS

Short Message Service (SMS) is the largest data application on the planet. An estimated 6.1 trillion SMS messages were sent in 2009 by five billion users worldwide. This number is expected to exceed 10 trillion in 2013 (mobiThinking 2011). It is also one of the simplest and most effective mobile marketing channels available.

SMS messages can be a maximum of 160 characters in length, although it is possible to string several messages together in order to send longer messages. Messages can be sent from one phone to another or from a desktop computer to a phone and vice versa.

Almost all mobile phones support SMS services, and this is what makes it one of the most popular methods of communication. The restriction on the amount of data that can be communicated through SMS demands simplicity, and so consideration must be given to working creatively within the space made available by a small screen.

The popularity of SMS has not been negatively affected by the growth of other mobile media (for example instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter and email). It is the simplicity and availability of SMS which makes it a preferred method of mobile communication.

Business to business (B2B) SMS messaging is also a versatile tool; relaying information, reminders, SMS chains or an automated confirmation for anything from shipping to billing. Business to customer (B2C) messaging delivers products or services directly to the consumer. Banking transaction notifications, tickets or information can all be sent through to users' mobile phones via SMS.

SMS can offer useful marketing options; it enables two-way communication which allows subscribers to activate services and cheaply access important information. However, abusing this type of communication can also be hugely problematic. The mobile phone is a highly personal device, and the potential to invade mobile users' personal spaces is much greater.

SMS and marketing

With twice as many SMS users worldwide as there are email users SMS should be a no-brainer for marketers (mobiThinking 2011). However, mobile phone users have proved reluctant to hand over their phone number for marketing messages, perhaps fearing a similar deluge of spam for which email has such a poor reputation.

This is changing to some extent, with the prevalence of Common Short Codes (CSC) in marketing and advertising campaigns. As consumers are so comfortable with using text messages for their communication, no extensive education process is required to have consumers access marketing campaigns based on CSCs.

CSCs are short codes used in text messages, usually to get something in return like a competition entry. These can be sent to and from consumers, and often use keywords. There are two standard keywords that should always elicit a standard response:

- **STOP.** Unsubscribe the sender's number from the service.
- **HELP.** A support request from the sender's number.

Sending Messages

Once prospective customers have given permission to communicate with them via their mobile number, timely messages can be sent to their mobile phone. These can be promotional or sales orientated, such as special offers or information about upcoming events. On many phones, prospects need to at least open an SMS message in order to delete it. Mobile phones are generally kept on one's person at all times, meaning that messages are more likely to be read very soon after being broadcast.

There are several ways that SMS messages can be utilised to complement an existing marketing strategy.

- **Customer Relationship Management**
SMS updates can be an exceptionally useful tool for customer relationship management (CRM). In the travel industry, hotel and airplane reservations can be sent by mobile phone, with updates being sent close to the time of travel. These short messages can include directions or details of a flight's status.

When it comes to insurance claims or order processing, SMS updates on the progress of a claim or order can reduce call centre volume and go a long way to ensuring that a client feels valued and cared for.

- **Promotions**

SMS messages present a way to send timely sales promotion information to a large database for a relatively low-cost. These can be targeted to a particular time of day when prospects are most likely to be out shopping.

- **Receiving Messages**

CSCs are often used to receive messages from prospects or customers. They provide a fast, instant, and trackable means for the public to enter competitions, voice opinions, or make requests. Even better for a company, the costs can often be passed on to the consumer, meaning that it can be a cost-effective way to receive marketing messages.

18.4.2 MMS

Multimedia message service (MMS) messages contain graphics, audio, video, or images and text. These messages allow for richer information to be sent using WAP, but the costs are considerably higher.

MMS messages are particularly useful in viral campaigns, whether encouraging participants to use their phones to create content (photographic, audio, or video) or to pass on content.

18.4.3 Bluetooth and Infrared

Most modern mobile phones present an array of means for connecting. As well as using the cellular network, many phones have 3G (Third Generation) and Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) capabilities, and the ability to connect via Bluetooth or Infrared.

If a user sets their Bluetooth enabled mobile phone to “discoverable,” Bluetooth devices within range of the phone can request to connect to the phone and exchange messages and data. This can be used to send location-specific marketing messages, such as discount codes in a shopping mall.

note



The Bluetooth logo indicates where Bluetooth is available.

18.4.4 USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Services Data)

Unstructured supplementary services data (USSD) is an alternative messaging system to SMS (short message service) and is available on most GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) networks.

Unlike SMS, USSD is a protocol that allows for a query-and-response type of action between the customer and a service center, where these transactions can be seen to be similar to a session on a website. USSD services are initiated by the user who enters a code on his phone and then sends that as a request to the network. The code differs from the number an SMS is sent to because it includes the symbols # and *. For example, *100# can be used to check the balance of a prepaid airtime or credit. These services are often used by networks to provide a service to a customer, such as requesting balance information, adding credit to a prepaid contract, or passing on credit to another mobile phone user.

It is a rudimentary navigation, but with far faster response times and lower costs when compared to SMS or to mobile browsing.

18.4.5 QR Codes

QR Codes offer a way to compress complex information into an image that can be decoded by your mobile phone. QR Codes are a pull technology – they allow users to take the actions they want conveniently and quickly. This can be useful for sharing product or promotional information. QR Codes can offer users with camera phones a convenient way to get information with just one click. These barcodes can be interpreted by camera phones to provide website URLs, contact information, discount vouchers or even to activate downloads. One of the exciting benefits of QR Codes is that they offer a way to activate offline advertising and make it interactive and measurable. A print campaign can, for example, include a barcode which can be used to send a user directly to your website.



Figure 18.1 GottaQuirk QR code.

The above may look like a hybrid between a crossword and Sudoku puzzle, but it's really the QR Code for the URL of the mobile version of the marketing blog GottaQuirk, m.gottaquirk.com. These codes are multifunctional and very useful to marketers. We can use ours to encourage people to register to receive our newsletter or fulfil any number of other goals.

18.4.6 Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) is a variation of virtual reality. Rather than immersing the user in a virtual world, however, AR takes computer graphics and superimposes them into "reality"—the physical space around the person operating an AR device. These graphics can be 3D images or simply information tags about a location.

While AR devices are relatively new, they do have a history outside their use in mobile phones. They can and have been used in medicine (superimposing surgical information onto a patient's body), architecture (superimposing virtual buildings into a space where they are yet to be built), or for cross-continental collaboration where participants can't be in the same room.

Augmented Reality in Brand Communications

The first use of AR in advertising was by HIT Lab NZ and Saatchi & Saatchi in 2005 for an application for the Wellington Zoo, which allowed users to view virtual animals by pointing their phone cameras at printed bar codes (History of Mobile Augmented Reality).

At present, applications have been interesting but often more gimmicky than useful. Some of the examples include an Ikea campaign that allowed people to view virtual versions of their furniture in their homes through their phone cameras.

The Future of Augmented Reality

AR is relatively new and still has a long way to go. Barriers like development costs and user education have held it back, but with smartphones becoming more common, the potential for AR applications is increasing as well.

Going forward, there are a number of challenges AR faces: investment in development and the potential for serious privacy concerns being the most notable. The images below illustrate what is possible when the realms of social media, identity recognition, and geographical location are combined—both exciting and scary stuff.



Figure 18.2 Augmented reality presents some interesting possibilities.

Source: www.matthewbuckland.com

18.4.7 Location and Mobile

At this stage you should be well aware that convenience and location form two essential strengths of the mobile marketing world. If services and useful information can be shared based on a user's location, the possibilities for conversion naturally increase.

A survey conducted by IBM with more than 32 000 consumers found that 75% of people wanted to use their mobile phones to discover where the nearest stores are located. And 61% of users surveyed shared that they would spend more with a retailer if personalised offers and stock checks were provided online (Boran 2010).

Combining mobile marketing techniques with geo-location can go a long way in providing customers with what they need.

There are a few different scenarios possible for implementing location in your mobile marketing campaigns. Location targeted search offers some significant benefits. If searching for a local doctor, for example, it would be immensely useful to find the closest one and a map to their location in the first listed result. Localised news results could also offer a better user experience for someone conducting a mobile news search. Combining short codes or QR Codes with print advertising in an area could present another way to provide consumers with geo-relevant information. A QR Code in store or on a poster could offer a discount voucher to someone coming to the local retail store for example.

When combined with location awareness, mobile search offers much in terms of targeted user experience.

If a website can detect what handset someone is using and where they are, content customised to their location could be delivered, either automatically or after user input.

Many social media and social networking sites are also adopting and encouraging geo-tagging as a way for users to comment on media. Services such as Foursquare and Facebook Places encourage users to “check-in” when they are at various locations.

These possibilities naturally present a number of concerns and challenges when it comes to user privacy. No one wants their location constantly published without their permission, and notifications that randomly come to your phone in certain areas could prove highly annoying if control doesn’t remain in the hands of the user.

For this reason marketers need to provide a method for people to unsubscribe. You could consider contacting users through alternative channels in order to check up on the service and allow them options for customising the kinds of messages they receive.

It must be said, however, that implementation has not always lived up to what is possible in this area. Possibilities like geographic report backs on the efficacy of campaigns in certain areas could be immensely valuable, but all of these services and ideas need input from mobile operators, advertising networks and advertising agencies. Network operators often closely guard all user information. Smartphones already present a number of ways to notify networks of their location, but these are not yet prevalent across the whole mobile phone population. In other words, options seem endless, but beware of the hype.

Social Mobile Networks

What are we talking about when we discuss mobile social networks? First off, online social networks have extended their presence to mobile phones.

- <http://m.facebook.com/>
- <http://m.twitter.com/>

At the top of the following page there are examples of websites which have been adjusted for mobile – Facebook.mobi, for example, allows for people to receive updates via SMS.

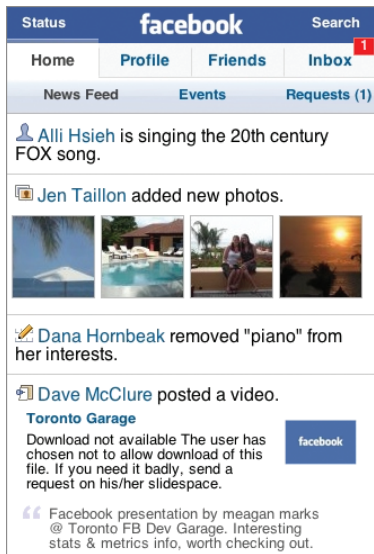


Figure 18.3 Facebook’s made for mobile site.

Source: Wikipedia

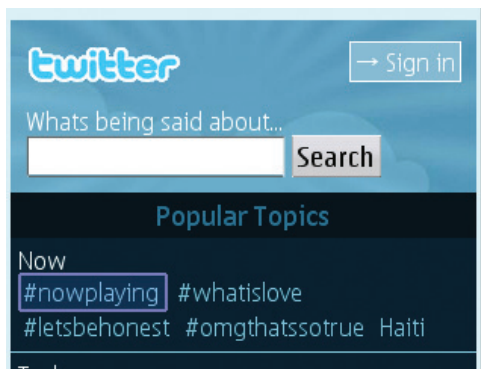


Figure 18.4 Twitter’s made for mobile site.

Source: Wikipedia

In addition to this there are a number of social networks created specifically for mobile phones and centred on the potential of location-specific awareness.

One successful example of mobile social networking is MXit. This South African based company provides a messaging and social networking platform that has become popular amongst the South African youth. With millions of users, MXit is a cheaper messaging alternative to standard SMS. In addition to the chat rooms that users interact in, MXit offers brands the option to sell multimedia downloads, and customised skins as well as create branded chat rooms for particular competitions or promotions. MXit has its own currency – Moola – which makes it possible for exchanges to happen via MXit’s commerce system Tradepost.



Figure 18.5 MXit Tradepost offers a number of options, some free and others for sale.

MoTribe (www.motribe.com) is a platform that allows anyone to create a mobile social network. So, any organisation can gather people together, without the need for computers.

There are a number of social networks on mobile, especially in Japan where low data rates have made the technology available to a larger section of the population. As the different networks evolve it is worth considering the potential of social search as well. Product or brand searches based around social networks and location can be a powerful tool: personal referrals are now combined with location specific information.

Mobile social networks can also have operational value, especially from a sales and leads perspective. As getting work done becomes more important than where it is done, tools that enable communication are more and more essential to CRM. And mobile phones lie at the centre of this.

Location-based Social Media

Leading platforms allow people to tag locations with notes or information, and to let their friends or network of contacts know where they are. Some users may prefer not to do this, but for others the ability to comment on their daily lives is exciting and connects them with people who may not be physically near them through content.

A network like Foursquare (www.foursquare.com) offers a social incentive to check in at locations – the people who visit the most become the “Mayor” and can get cash discounts or vouchers at participating locations.

The value of these networks to marketers is still growing. One thing to be sure of is that users want mobile networks which offer them utility.

18.4.8 Driving Traffic to Mobile Assets

As with the ‘traditional web’, assets on the mobile web gain life and value as users interact with them. While there is less competition now, with time there will be many more mobile assets like websites competing for visitors. In this section we will be looking at display networks and advertising networks as well as mobile search engine optimisation (SEO) and analytics.

Display and Advertising Networks

These networks connect content creators or publishers with advertisers who want to advertise on the back of their content. Mobile content (whether sites or applications) and advertising networks work in conjunction. There are a number of networks in existence, some better known than others, but the general experienced opinion seems to be that size matters less than the particular benefits of each network.



Figure 18.6 Virgin taps into Mobile space.

(source: Mobilemarketer.com)

Networks offer different audiences and costing models (cost per acquisition or cost per mil for example) and so it's important to match your campaign to the appropriate network.

The Mobithinking blog suggests you consider far more than which the biggest network is, rather focusing on:

- Where you want to advertise.
- What type of publisher you want.
- Whether you want to focus on budget or top of range.
- Whether you want to bid in a self service market or have your account handled for you.
- How precisely you want to target your advertising (the more precise the more expensive).
- What tools are available to track and optimise the campaign.
- The potential return on investment.
- How wide you want to cast the net?

(mobithinking 2009)

These factors can all help in determining which network is best for you. Some only operate in specific countries, while others may offer great reach but less specific targeting and ROI. Your choice will obviously depend on your specific campaign.

The BuzzCity Mobile Advertising Index reports that in Q4 of 2009, mobile advertising grew by 41% in countries such as Turkey, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Mexico, while during the whole of 2010, a total of 52.8 billion ad banners were delivered across the network - a growth of 93% compared to 2009.

African states also continued to grow. According to the same index, in 2010, the Kenyan audience on the mobile Internet grew by 245%. In Nigeria traffic grew by almost 200% in Q4.

Mobile display networks are divided into three areas:

Blind networks

These networks target a large number of independent mobile publishers, and generally allow you to target by country or type of content, but not by specific websites. Payment tends to be on a cost per click (CPC) basis, which can vary. An example of this kind of network is AdMob (www.admob.com).

Premium blind networks

Advertising on premium blind networks tends to be more expensive, but allows for targeting better known brands and high traffic sites. Broadcasters or operators portals fall under this category. Payment here is often on a CPM basis. Millennial Media (<http://www.millennialmedia.com/>) is an example network. While targeting options are available, the networks can work in different ways, with varying levels of support.

Premium networks

These networks are often offering sales as a direct extension of the big brands that they offer. More detailed targeting and sales support is available, but also higher rates.

18.4.9 How to Set Up a Mobile Display Campaign on a Display Network

It is incredibly important to ensure, just as with any tactic used in digital marketing, that you've covered the following questions before deciding to use a mobile display network as a tactic in your overall strategy:

- What are the objectives of the campaign?
- Who is the target audience?
- What budget is available?
- How long will the campaign run for?

Once this is in place, and the decision has been made to run a mobile campaign on a display network, much of the guidelines for running ads on the desktop-based display network also apply to running a mobile campaign on a display network. To illustrate, here is a guide to advertise on the Google mobile display network.

First off, it is recommended that you create a separate campaign just for your mobile adverts and settings. Then, mobile display network adverts can use one of three different actions if advertised on the Google display network:

- (The usual) Clickthrough to the advertiser site.
- A click that sends the user to a Google-supplied Business Page.
- A click that immediately and automatically places a voice call to the advertiser's phone number, called a click-to-call advert.

In addition, a decision needs to be made about whether to use text ads, image adverts or a combination of both.

18.4.10 Text or Image Ads

Mobile text ads

Like desktop-based campaigns, the mobile text adverts for the display network can contain, including spaces, 25 characters for the title, 70 characters for the advert text, and 35 characters for a display URL. On Google, this is displayed on four lines: a title, two lines of advert text (each with 35 characters), and a URL line.

Alternatively, with the click-to-call option type advert, a number can be entered that users can click-to-call, replacing the URL.

Mobile image ads

Mobile image adverts through Google AdWords are not yet available worldwide, but the list of target countries continues to grow. All images must be in a .JPEG, .GIF, or .PNG format. Animated .GIF images are also acceptable. However, they must follow the same guidelines and specifications as desktop-based image adverts, including being 'family-safe'.



Figure 18.7 Some examples of the sizes available for mobile image ads.

Remember, crafting a mobile image ad in Flash may be a wasted investment as most mobile phones cannot display any Flash content.

Essentially, these ads are identical to mobile text ads, but as the name implies, a small image replaces the standard three lines of text on the display network.

mini case study: NAVTEQ campaign –mobile advertising success:

Digital map service NAVTEQ created a mobile marketing service called LocationPoint Advertising designed for mobile German consumers utilising Nokia Ovi-Map enabled smartphones. It is the first location-based mobile advertising campaign of its kind and was first trialled for Best Western, a hotel group in Germany with 180 properties.

The system utilised the company's location content and ability to pinpoint where mobile consumers were. It then delivered geo-specific advertisements and Calls to Action from merchants within the area which guided the consumer to their doorstep.

The adverts also took advantage of the focus-driven browsing of customers, and included several strong Calls to Action including "click-to-call", "click to web" and "click to map". The advertisements enticed consumers with an offer of 30% discount when making an early booking at one of the Great Western hotels.

This system focused on the customers' very precise needs by providing geo-specific information on accommodation for people in unfamiliar areas or within a short distance of a Best Western property. It's a personal and relevant invitation for the consumers to become guests at one of the Best Western Hotels.

After the month long campaign, the results showed that a clickthrough rate of 1.44% was generated, which is more than seven times the 0.19% average of online banner

ads, according to Forrester Research. And 15% of all consumers who clicked on the initial ad requested mapping information to the local Best Western property. Trials are currently being deployed in the United States as well as other parts of Europe.



18.5 optimising for mobile search

The Mobile Search Space

Mobile search is a relatively young, developing field. As such, it presents both challenges and opportunities. There is not yet a huge amount of information available on mobile search, both in terms of user trends and search engine

optimisation tactics. However, more is becoming available all the time. Because of the superior reach of mobile vs. traditional Internet, coupled with the power of search, mobile SEO is an increasingly important focus area.

The overarching principles of search on the web also apply to search on mobile. That is: search engines strive to deliver users the most relevant, useful results, based on their search query, and other available data. In mobile, this “other available data” has a significant new dimension, as the user’s location is often more relevant to the search results than with desktop search.

Most of the basic principles of SEO for the web apply to the mobile space. Where there are differences, these are mainly due to:

- Search engines delivering **relevant location-based results** to mobile users.
- The **importance of usability** in sites for mobile devices.
- Search engines **having less data** to work with (as compared to traditional web) in terms of site history, traffic, and inbound links.

As more mobile sites are created and indexed, and the search engines get a better sense of how best to fulfil mobile users’ needs, we can expect changes in how mobile search queries are answered. For now, a focus on the core principles of making your site accessible to web crawlers, and developing properly formatted, relevant content around chosen key phrases for which you wish to compete, will set a solid foundation for further optimisation.

Mobile Search Engine Market Share

Google dominates the mobile search market as it does the “desktop web” search market.

- **Google: 98.29%**
- **Yahoo: 0.81%**
- **Bing: 0.46%**

(TechCrunch.com 2010)

An important factor is that the mobile carrier’s choice of search partner (pre-loaded on the phone) often dictates (or influences) the user’s choice of search engine. As with the traditional web, it makes sense to focus largely on Google search, while keeping an eye on Yahoo’s respective platforms.

Mobile Search Volumes

We know that mobile search volumes are growing at an exponential rate. Google reports that their global mobile search volumes increased by 500% in the 24 months up to May 2010. Further, they reported a 62% increase in searches on smartphones in Q1 2010 as compared to Q4 2009.

Interestingly, a SEMPO white paper reports that searches performed on iPhones represented a massive 36.9% of all mobile searches, showing a much greater propensity to search among smart phone users.

Mobile Search Habits

A key difference between mobile and traditional web searches is that the majority of mobile searches are navigational, rather than informational, in nature. This means that mobile searchers very often know what they are looking for to start with. The implication here is that brand and product names (and perhaps even competitor terms) must be considered in terms of a mobile keyword strategy.

Further, Nielsen reports that mobile users are highly “search dominant”, meaning they often turn to search to navigate, even if they know what site they want to end up on. This means it is important to have your site rank well, especially for its own name (brand or domain). Because of this, it is important that the mobile SEO strategy is tied in with other campaigns and tactics being used to promote your URL.

Another aspect of mobile search is that the user is looking for a **concise, actionable response to a particular problem**, which is often location specific. This is where your site could potentially begin to attain traffic from more high volume search terms. One option is having your business listed in (or your review site associated with) the local results. Another is offering other useful location specific content to compete for rankings in the normal results.

There are an increasing variety of ways in which users can input mobile search queries: voice, images and barcodes can all be used to trigger searches on Google. Furthermore, the blended results returned by Google Mobile Search might include the following verticals (where appropriate): web, image, product, news, location, directory, movies, and results.

As each of these search verticals is indexed separately and some of the indices are much smaller than others, it is possible to improve rankings in a competitive situation by ranking well in one or more of the non-text verticals. It is also possible to dominate more of the SERP real estate than before, by ranking in multiple vertical indices.

Finally, in light of the reduced screen space on mobile devices, there is an increase in competition for above the fold rankings. Most users will not see more than two or three results above the fold (device dependent). And since mobile web use is more of a challenge to most users than traditional web use, users are more likely than before to go for the most easy-to-reach (read “above the fold”) result, making high ranking all the more important.

Mobile SEO Best Practice

What follows is a list of key guidelines for mobile SEO best practice that developers must consider.

Fundamentals of Desktop SEO:

- A usable, crawlable site
- Relevant, original content
- Inbound links (indicators of relevance / authority)

Fundamentals of Mobile SEO:

- A usable, crawlable site is very important and must be addressed first.
- Content is still important, especially having it properly formatted for mobile consumption.
- Links are less important (at this time).

The importance of content tailored for mobile consumption

Content which has been properly formatted for mobile devices is the most important aspect of your mobile SEO efforts. Since search engines aim to supply searchers with the most relevant content that they can, it makes sense that they will rather serve content for mobile search that is properly formatted for mobile devices as opposed to content which has not been formatted for phones.

Content formatted only for traditional web consumption can be very difficult to read on a mobile device, especially if it is image rich and lengthy. So you will likely find it difficult to rank, especially in competitive areas, if you do not make sure that the content formatting and presentation is appropriate to the device.

Label your site appropriately

It is best practice to create a separate, 'tailored for mobile version' of your site and host it under an obviously named domain, sub-domain or folder.

Examples of commonly used domain, sub-domain or folder variations for mobile sites are:

- www.yoursite.mobi
- m.yoursite.com
- www.yoursite.com/m

Further points to note about Mobile SEO:

- **The submission of mobile XML sitemaps** to search engines is important, as they are still in the phase of looking to be told where good mobile content is.
- **The relationship between desktop and mobile** versions is important.

While inbound links are thought to play less of a role at present in mobile SEO than traditional SEO, they are likely still a ranking factor. So, organically developed, quality links will certainly help the cause, both from regular and mobile sites. There is a school of thought which says that inbound links from other mobile sites are worth more, as they indicate a site deemed by the linker to be worthy of mobile traffic.

Featuring the word “mobile” in the copy of the mobile site is thought to be important as a signal to search engines of the relevance of the site to mobile users.

A changing landscape

As mobile search, and the mobile Internet space in general, is relatively young and developing, it is important to bear in mind that the way that mobile search results are ranked will change.

For instance, it would make sense for Google to deliver mostly quality, mobile-optimised sites to searchers using mobile devices, as well as those filtering their search results by “mobile”. Thus, we would expect the first page to be full of mobile optimised sites for some common search terms.

This is not the case at present as there is not enough quality, properly formatted mobile content available for the search engines to deliver.

note

You can check mobile search results from a desktop or laptop by going to Google Mobile located at <http://www.google.com/m>

So in any browser simply type in <http://www.google.com/m> or <http://www.google.co.za/m> to see the results returned to mobile searchers.

Once the mobile Internet landscape is more densely populated, competition amongst quality mobile sites (for ranking on popular terms) will increase. Then, for instance, factors such as volume and authority of inbound links could become more important to distinguish authority and relevance among competitors.

Mobile Search and Traditional Search: an Integrated Strategy

Mobile search results are (currently) a blend of mobile and traditional websites. This can be used to your advantage, allowing you the opportunity to own more of the SERP real estate by having a mobile and traditional version of your site.

This means mobile users, for whom it is very important to have properly formatted versions of your normal site’s content, could end up viewing your traditional site on their mobile device. Search traffic gained this way could be useless as the bad user experience will hamper the chances of them converting to your site’s goals.

You need an integrated strategy to make the most of organic search opportunities.

Getting the right site to the right user

To make sure that the appropriate site is delivered to the device being used, there are several options:

- A **“detect and redirect”** policy: the user-agent variable is used to detect mobile visitors to the regular website, and redirect them to the mobile site. This approach is best practice.
- **Linking between the two**: place a link to the mobile version on the regular website, and vice versa, which allows users to choose which version to see, should they end up on the wrong version of the site. This is mobile web usability best practice.
- **Mention of the word “mobile”** in the content on the mobile site: this distinguishes the mobile site to search engines as the most relevant result for mobile search.

Mobile Analytics

Analytics for mobile sites and applications is relatively young, but given that anyone investing in a new technology is interested in return on investment, being able to track the effectiveness of your campaign is an essential part of mobile marketing.

‘Traditional’ analytics, focusing on the web rather than the mobile web, has come a long way in terms of providing us with information about what keywords brought users to our sites, which referrers were used and how long people spent on a page, as well as a number of other metrics. Through various tools you can gain insight into your users’ actions and from there deduce information about their intent, using this to refine your web presence and campaigns.

While some would argue that both spheres face data collection challenges, there is an understanding that mobile analytics present more challenges in terms of sourcing reliable data.

The first thing to acknowledge is that users of mobile analytics might be looking for different kinds of information. Given design challenges, primary information would include what device is being used, what network is being used, what browser is used and then information about screen size.

Judah Phillips of Metrics Insider lists the following challenges for mobile analytics:

- **Not all mobile browsers support JavaScript**, meaning that the most common method for collecting data is not available on a lot of mobile phones. Mobile analytics packages have had to come up with alternative implementation methods like packet-sniffers and accessing log-files.
- **Handset capability detection**: This can be a challenge for some packages, and is not offered as a rule. If this information is important for your site, you may need to carefully investigate the analytics package you use.

Beyond this however, there are a number of tools that have developed to provide mobile analytics data. Some of the most often discussed include the offerings from AdMob and Google Analytics, which are both available for free. Google Analytics for mobile offers options for tracking iPhone and Android applications, and for tracking mobile websites. Its server side tracking options can be used to track sites on phones which don't support JavaScript.

18.6 pros and cons

The mobile phone has many benefits but also comes with its own challenges. Many mobile marketing mediums need little audience education, but marketers need to be careful when creating more complicated campaigns and applications. If there is an extensive education process required in order for a campaign to succeed, it probably needs to be rethought.

Because the mobile phone is so personal, permission and privacy need to be at the foundation of any mobile campaign. Unlike with email or web pages where there is space available on screen to explain privacy and permission, there is very little real estate on the mobile phone to do so. Ensure that you have very clear permission to market to the phone numbers on your database and that it is easy for users to opt out of receiving your messages.

18.7 summary

The mobile phone cannot be ignored as an important tool in any marketing campaign. There are messaging capabilities unique to the mobile phone which can be very effective, from SMS and MMS, to USSD and Bluetooth.

Exciting technological developments also open up the opportunities for interactive campaigns and mobile experiences. Although not widely adopted yet, QR codes can be the point of interaction connecting other media to the mobile phone. Augmented reality campaigns can also create a rich interactive experience for a user by adding a layer of information to the real world.

There are also many ways to use the mobile phone to drive traffic to mobile websites and applications. There are many networks where advertising can be bought, at various levels of targeting. Adverts can be simple lines of text, or even banner images. Actions can be clickthroughs to a website, or can make use of the fact that the advertising is on a phone with a click-to-call option, connecting the user to the advertiser.

As with the traditional web, search is a very key aspect of mobile internet. More and more users are turning to the search box on their mobile phone to find

services nearby. Savvy website owners should already be optimising their sites and assets for mobile search to make the most of this growing opportunity.

As with any digital marketing approach, planning is vital. While the mobile phone can offer a dazzling array of marketing and communication opportunities, knowing your audience will help you to best plan those most suited to your market and your campaign.

18.8 the bigger picture

Mobile communications should always be considered in terms of their place within your other marketing communications. The mobile channel is not a separate one, but rather one which can be accessed and integrated with many other forms of communication.

18.9 case study: MXit and the virtual rehab:

MXit is a mobile social network platform, utilising instant messaging technology that was developed in South Africa by MXit Lifestyle. Aside from being able to log into MXit using a mobile phone with GPRS/3G, this software is also compatible on PC desktops via the MXit website, and other messaging platforms such as Google Talk, MSN Messenger and ICQ. This unique service allows the user to engage with other users by receive one-on-one text and multimedia messages, it also has general chat rooms available.

Having looked at the engagement benefit that MXit provides its users, it was the ingenious Marlon Parker, a social entrepreneur and lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, who collaborated with RLabs (Reconstructed Living Labs) and developed a live counselling portal, Jamiix, aptly named "Angel".

The aim of this initiative, according to Parker, is to reach and assist as many South African youths as possible by using a platform they recognise and trust. There is an estimated registered user base of over 19 million users on MXit, who log on approximately 20 million times per day, and send and receive over 250 million messages (Verclas, 2009). There are about 35 000 messages sent and received per second during peak hour. The application has an international reach and is used by over 120 countries daily, the bulk of which are in South Africa and Indonesia (Verclas, 2009).

Angel is available to all users on MXit, and provides information and support for substance abuse, abuse, depression, stress and coping. Currently this service only has 12 counsellors, who are available to offer support on a daily basis between 3pm and 6pm (Ajam, 2010).

Angel was released in June 2010 in conjunction with Drug Awareness Week in South Africa (21 to 27 June 2010). The service currently has over 40 500 subscribers, and as of 6 July 2010, there were 3953 conversations between counsellors and users and 22 731 messages sent and received since the launch (Parker, 2010).

case study questions

1. What is it about the mobile channel that has led to such success for a counselling endeavor of this nature?
2. Why is MXit the ideal technology for this kind of interaction?

chapter questions

1. What makes SMS such a powerful marketing medium?
2. When is it a good idea to invest in an Augmented Reality application for your brand?
3. What are the main benefits and concerns of mobile advertising?
4. How would you go about deciding which engagement method is the best one for your target market?

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further reading

- <http://www.insidermobile.com/> - InsiderMobile covers the latest mobile news and features from various leading experts in the mobile communications industry. It also has handy reviews of different handsets.
- <http://www.comscore.com/> - ComScore is one of the leading digital marketing websites, regularly releasing white papers and statistics which have proven invaluable to many QuirkStars.
- <http://www.mobilemarketer.com/> - Mobile Marketer, as the name implies, is geared heavily towards different forms of mobile marketing. Keep an eye on this site for news and developments in this fast changing industry.

What's inside: An **introduction** to Customer Relationship Management, why CRM plays a **massive role in marketing** and how Jeff Bezos **changed the world of Internet sales**. We look at **different forms of customer relationship management** and touch on the **increasingly vital aspect** of Online Reputation Management. We discuss how shoe selling giant Zappos **looks after customers**, and provide a case study **showcasing a CRM platform**.

19.1 introduction

If anything, the Internet and the World Wide Web have highlighted the importance of a customer-focused approach to business and marketing. It may seem obvious now, but the heydays of mass media marketing worked on the premise that people could be persuaded to purchase anything, provided there was sufficient advertising to promote a product. While signs declaring, “The Customer is Always Right” may have been stuck to the walls of shops and restaurants, the customer did not have much of a voice outside of that shop or restaurant.

Move forward a few decades to an increasingly connected society and market place, and the customer’s voice is being heard in blogs, forums, reviews and other forms of social media. It’s easier for consumers to connect with one another, albeit virtually, to share experiences with services and products.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is, as the name suggests, about managing relationships with customers. It should imply a customer-focused approach to business focused on fostering real relationships with these important stakeholders: customers.

Often, online marketing is referred to as electronic customer relationship management (eCRM). This appears to underline the importance of technology in CRM. It also highlights the most important consideration of any digital marketing tactic: customers.

19.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Analytical CRM	Software that assists a business in building customer relationships and analyses ways to improve them.
Collaborative CRM	Umbrella term for all the interactive options for serving customers. It is people-based customer support that includes: collaborative browsing, web-based text and voice chat, desktop sharing, application sharing, file transfer and phone support.
Conversion funnel	A defined path that visitors should take to reach the final objective.
Customer relationship management (CRM)	A strategy for managing a company’s interactions with clients and potential clients. It often makes use of technology to automate the sales, marketing, customer service and technical processes of an organisation.
Customer	A person who buys or uses goods or services. A person with whom a business must deal.

eCRM	Electronic Customer Relationship Management.
Lead	A potential customer.
Operational CRM	Entails supporting the “front office” business processes, which include customer contact (sales, marketing and service).
Salesforce automation	A type of program that automates the business task of sales associated with effective implementation, productivity forecasts.
Stakeholder	A person or organisation with an interest (a “stake”) in how a resource is managed.
Vendor Relationship Management (VRM)	The emerging school of thought that incorporates the tools, technology and services that make it easy for customers to manage relationships with vendors.

19.3 why eCRM?

Customers can be seen as the most important stakeholder in the success of a business. Without customers purchasing goods or services, most businesses would not have a revenue stream. But it can be difficult to shift from realising this important fact to implementing it in day-to-day business decisions and strategy.

A successful relationship with a customer is based on meeting (and perhaps even exceeding) her needs. It is in determining what problems the customer has, and in providing solutions to those problems.

Maintaining good customer relationships is critical to the success of a business. The costs associated with acquiring a new customer are generally far higher than the cost of maintaining an existing customer relationship. This is why investing in CRM should result in increasing revenue for the business.

The cycle of CRM starts with determining what problems potential customers might have, and then presenting solutions to those problems. Solutions are implemented, and then ongoing service maintains the relationship with the customer.

Take, for example, two people booking an overseas holiday. One is a 23-year-old recent graduate visiting Argentina for three months with a friend; one is a 38-year-old mother of two young children planning a family holiday to Thailand. If they both walked into a travel agency, the travel agents would make judgements on their dress and appearance to determine how they will aid each of them in booking their holiday (and how much commission the agent will be able to earn). The travel agent will also ask further face to face questions to try to sell additional services to these two customers. For the 23-year-old, additional services might include travel insurance which covers extreme

sports activities and a calling card that allows her to call home from anywhere in the world. For the 38-year-old, additional services could include babysitting services included in a hotel reservation.

Seat the two potential travellers in front of their computers, and you no longer have human travel agents to make snap judgements based on appearance or to try to sell additional services based on the type of traveller they see. Of course, you also no longer have the overhead costs of a travel agency and agents. However, web technology does allow for similar, and often superior, judgements and sales opportunities.

For example, both travellers are likely to have started researching their trips using a search engine. Creating landing pages tailored to the types of searches made can allow the opportunity to tailor the products presented to each traveller.

Technology can also be used to allow the online business to interact personally with a web visitor, and also to provide the visitor with information they might not get from a travel agent such as unbiased reviews from other customers. Technology can and should be used to treat different customers differently.

Internet technology allows for customer related marketing decisions to be made and tested relatively quickly, and adjusted as required.

For example, in 2002, Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com launched free shipping for orders over \$99 in value. While the offer was advertised as being for a limited time only, this time limit enabled Amazon to test the effect of the offer on its bottom line and still retract it if necessary. Over the months, the order threshold for free shipping dropped, and today US Amazon.com orders over \$25 ship for free. However, free shipping does not mean priority shipping, so orders can be delivered in a shorter period of time – for a delivery fee. In 2011, Amazon has been testing this type of offer with long distance territories. Customers in South Africa and India have had a free shipping offer for orders of over £25 from Amazon.co.uk.

eCRM uses technology in a number of ways to cement CRM into the way that organisations conduct themselves. Once a business shifts its focus to customer needs, they will find that all these technologies feed into each other. However, the fundamental principle of eCRM is to remember that technology should be used to enable customer relationships, not replace meaningful relationships.

Firstly, the data that is collected online should be used to build meaningful profiles of potential customers, and that information should be used in fostering relationships. Web analytics tools gather a wealth of data that can inform customer relationships, from search keywords used to reach a website,

to navigation paths on a website. It is even possible to capture this kind of information against specific customers when they perform an action such as purchasing or subscribing on a website. Without the customer knowing, the referral source of their visit and even an indication of their navigation path can be captured along with their order or registration details and stored for future use.

Bespoke CRM software enables businesses to manage all customer and lead information across all departments in a centralised place. No matter who a customer speaks to within a business, all employees can access the same information recorded over time – a 360 degree view of the customer. This means that any time someone inside the organisation looks up the customer information, he can see every interaction the organisation has had with the customer, what previous queries have been raised, and how these have been solved in the past.

Bespoke CRM software also enables businesses to automate much of the sales cycle, freeing salespeople to spend time on creating personal relationships where it matters – with potential and existing customers.

Technology, of course, has also changed the ways customers can contact companies. In the chapters on *Social Media* and *Online Reputation Management (ORM)*, the importance of letting the customer select communication channels was highlighted. Customer relationships are no longer driven by telephone contact centres, but instead blogs, Twitter, email and instant messenger (IM) are all used as customer service channels both pre and post sale.

discussion

Why is knowing what keywords purchasing customers use helpful for CRM?



Figure 19.1 Social networks such as Twitter have become an integral part of CRM.

19.3.1 Customer-Centric and Customer-Driven

It is one thing placing the customer at the centre of an organisation's planning and execution of business plans, and another having customers driving the direction of a business. Many new, web-based businesses rely on the latter for their business to succeed, and actively encourage customers to take the lead and add value to the business. Services such as Flickr (www.flickr.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com) are examples of services that are user-driven rather than user-centric. They provide tools which enable users to make the service their own, often by allowing outside developers access in order to create supplementary services. So, Flickr users can export their images and use them to make custom business cards on Moo (www.moo.com). There are many auxiliary services based on Twitter such as analysis services (www.klout.com) or access services (www.twhirl.org).

Savvy organisations can also provide tools to customers to drive their business, passing on tasks to customers which might ordinarily have been performed by the organisation. For example, many airlines now allow travellers to check-in online prior to arriving at the airport. Although they are giving travellers convenient tools and increased options when it comes to checking in, the airlines are also outsourcing the check-in process to their travellers. As more travellers elect to check themselves in, staff costs for airlines can be reduced. The travellers are doing the job for free. In some cases, low-cost airlines charge the customer more if the customer does not make use of self-service options.

Customer-centric, on the other hand, uses data to present the best possible experience to the customer. Amazon's collaborative filtering is an example of a customer-centric approach. Using customer data, Amazon will share products that you are more likely to prefer.

Customer-centric experiences are about personalisation: using data to create a tailored experience for the customer. Customer-driven experiences are about customisation: providing the tools that let a customer tailor his own experience.

19.4 types of CRM in organisations

CRM should infuse every aspect of a business (in the same way that marketing should infuse every aspect of a business), but it is useful to look at the different ways CRM is implemented.

Operational CRM refers to the most obvious channels that relate to customers: the front end of a business and its customer service. From a web technology

point of view, operational CRM informs the website a customer sees as well as their entire online user experience. Technology also enables effective customer service from providing numerous contact channels, to presenting technology that records all customer contacts.

Analytical CRM analyses data collected by a business to determine information about customers that can inform sales and marketing decisions. Data mining is a crucial step to effective CRM. Web analytics and conversion optimisation can be seen as part of the CRM process. Data collected about the nature of visits to your website can be used to make informed decisions about where to focus attention based on customer behaviour. Past purchasing behaviour of customers can be analysed to predict future purchasing behaviour. Data can be used to segment customers, and so communications can be tailored.

For example, Amazon.com uses the purchase history of a customer to make recommendations to that customer for future purchases. Thus, a customer who has purchased a number of cookbooks in the past will be sent offers related to cookbooks. Amazon.com also looks at the purchase behaviour of customers who buy the same book, and uses that data to recommend books based on similar customer's preferences. This process is referred to as collaborative filtering.

Sales Force automation uses CRM software to manage sales cycles and to collect customer sales data. The software enables businesses to track leads, schedule transactions and communications with potential and existing customers and to generate detailed reporting on the sales process. There are numerous software providers, some of which are listed later in this chapter.

Collaborative CRM refers to a process, which combines customer data across all facets of a company. For example, queries regularly submitted to the technical support or customer service arm of a business can be used to inform website updates (updating content on the website to address a regularly submitted query) and to inform product development. Instead of various departments collecting their own customer data and using this in isolation, data is collaborated so that all channels make informed decisions based on an entire customer experience.

note

Data mining is the analysis of large volumes of data in order to determine patterns, correlations, relationships and trends in the data.

19.5 putting a value on CRM

Broadly, CRM can be looked at from:

- A **marketing perspective** - increasing the number of people who know about your service or product.
- A **sales perspective** - turning the people who know about your service or product into people who have purchased your service or product.
- A **service perspective** - ensuring people who have interacted with you are satisfied and delighted.

Effective CRM across all three channels can also create a powerful new marketing and referral force for a company: its happy customers. Delighting customers fosters positive word-of-mouth.

While CRM is a customer centric approach to doing business, CRM needs to be approached strategically, meaning it must be in line with the business objectives of a company.

The first step to any CRM initiative is to understand the value of a customer relationship to a business. While this is unique to each customer, data mining can be used to determine the value of segments of customers.

Relationship value =

Revenue generated by customer – Cost of acquiring and maintaining customer relationship

The revenue generated by a customer is literally the sales made to or through the customer. This can be calculated on a once-off basis directly related to the cost of acquiring that particular sale, or it can be calculated over the lifetime of the customer relationship. Referrals made by a customer can also be included as part of the revenue generated by the customer.

The cost of acquiring the customer refers to the marketing and advertising channels used to acquire that customer. In digital marketing, this is the cost per acquisition (CPA) of any of the channels used to acquire a customer. The benefit of digital marketing is that it is highly measurable and trackable, enabling a relatively accurate calculation of CPA.

The lifetime value of a customer refers to calculating the costs of both acquiring and retaining a customer against all purchases made over the lifetime of the customer relationship. One can also look at customer value in terms of the referrals that a customer generates for a company.

For example, a potential customer looking to purchase a digital camera is likely to search on Google for cameras. As a company selling digital cameras, your excellent PPC advert and compelling offer attracts the potential customer who clicks through to your website. Impressed with your product offering, the user purchases a camera from you, and signs up to your email newsletter as part of the payment process.

Analysing the amount spent on your PPC campaign against the sales attributed to the campaign will give the cost per acquisition of each sale. In this case, this is the cost of acquiring the new customer.



Panasonic Lumix TZ20 Digital Camera - Black (14.1MP MOS, 16x Optical Zoom) 3 inch Touchscreen LCD
 by [Panasonic](#)
 ★★★★★ (18 customer reviews) Like (104)
Colour Name:
 Black: £281.31

RRP: ~~£369.99~~
 Price: **£281.31** & this item **Delivered FREE in the UK** with Super Saver Delivery. [See details and conditions](#)
 You Save: **£88.68 (24%)**

In stock.
 Dispatched from and sold by **Amazon.co.uk**. Gift-wrap available.

Want guaranteed delivery by Wednesday, May 18? Order it in the next 10 hours and 26 minutes, and choose **Express** delivery at checkout. [See Details](#)
14 new from £280.00

Click for larger image and other views
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 + 

Protect This Item from Accidents with a 3-Year SquareTrade Warranty
 For just £48.99 more, protect your purchase from drops, spills, mechanical and electrical failures. ([Learn more](#))
[Add both to Basket](#)

Figure 19.2 Customers can do product research online, on sites like *Amazon.com*

As she has now signed up to your newsletter, each month you send her compelling information about products she might be interested in. If you have taken note of her obvious interest in photography, these newsletters could be focused on photography, and highlight additional products she can use with her new camera. The costs associated with sending these emails are the costs of maintaining the relationship with the customer. When she purchases from you again, these costs can be measured against the repeat sales likely to be made.

mini case study: defining loyalty and customer value

While most companies define customer loyalty based on the repeat purchases of happy customers, some businesses are built around once-off purchases. Wedding photography is one of those businesses. With so much time and effort invested in each customer relationship, how can this be returned into repeat business?

Bella photography focuses on ensuring that its very satisfied brides refer their service to friends and family. In fact 18% of new business comes from these referrals.

They also offer services to wedding guests, such as allowing them to make orders of wedding photos themselves, which increases their customers for each wedding. (Lewis 2008)

While CRM initiatives need to satisfy customer goals – increased customer satisfaction and approval – these need to be in line with business goals. Business goals are to increase overall revenue. In terms of CRM, this can be either to increase revenue generated by each customer, to increase the number of customers or to reduce the costs of acquiring a customer, or a combination of all three.

It is important to align CRM initiatives with business goals, so that success of the initiatives can be measured.

It is here especially that CRM goals can be set across marketing channels, sales channels and service channels.

mini case study: customer service as PR

Zappos (www.zappos.com), a US online shoe retailer, bases much of its success on its customer service. It offers free shipping on all its purchases, as well as free returns. In fact, goods are shipped with a pre-printed return label, making the process straightforward for customers. Zappos also invests heavily in its customer service team, empowering each member of the team to do what they need to do to satisfy customers.

Figure 19.3 The Zappos website, which can be found at Zappos.com

For example, Zaz LaMarr blogged about her experience with Zappos. Have some tissues handy, because it's heartwarming stuff, and read her post "I heart Zappos" at <http://www.zazlamarr.com/blog/?p=240>. She had meant to return some shoes to Zappos, but her mother passed away and, naturally, she just didn't have time. Zappos arranged to have UPS come pick up the shoes. And then sent her flowers.

Yahoo! shows nearly 2 000 links to her blog post, which has generated comments such as:

"Zappos is the best company in America."

"Zappos is pretty amazing...you can sometimes find better prices at other stores for the same shoes, but their customer service is worth a few extra dollars."

"Wow, customer service still exists. This company will get my business."

There is no doubt that Zappos customer service costs are high. Not only is shipping free, but their customer service team has been given the authority to make gestures like the one above. The return to Zappos in terms of goodwill is almost immeasurable (although, their online reputation is excellent), but no doubt leads to increased referrals and sales and customer loyalty (Marco 2007).

When it comes to the marketing channel, CRM initiatives can be used both in the acquisition of new customers and in the marketing to existing customers (which can be seen as acquiring new sales from existing customers).

19.6 using CRM to inform your digital marketing tactics

The chapters in this book have focused on the tactics of digital marketing. Managing customer relationships should be built into each tactic and all digital marketing activities.

Successful **email marketing** stems from a very basic customer need: privacy and permission. The very first step required in using email to establish a relationship with a customer is in gaining their permission.

Data mining and segmenting customer databases allows for email marketing to be tailored to customers, while emails allow for extensive personalisation albeit on a mass scale.

Email is often the primary point of contact for all customer service related messages, from automated emails dealing with the administration of orders, to contacts with the customer service team.

Online advertising is a double-edged sword when it comes to CRM. It can be a very effective acquisition tool for new customers, but intrusive advertising can attract attention for all the wrong reasons. Effective online advertising speaks to customers' needs and presents solutions to them, hopefully attracting attention without being overly intrusive.

Affiliate marketing started by making the most of existing relationships other parties have with potential customers. Affiliate marketing can be an excellent sales and acquisition channel, but is not without its problems from a CRM perspective. Another entity is acquiring leads on your behalf, which can mean a loss of control when it comes to the messages used to attract leads. Ensure effective communication with affiliates so that they are sending the right message to your leads.

Search engine marketing, whether **search engine optimisation** (SEO) or PPC starts with customer intent. Existing customer data can indicate where to focus search engine marketing efforts, especially when it comes to analysing how well a website caters to the intent indicated by a customer's search term.

The use of **social media** is based on customer needs and preferences. Online Reputation Management tracks social media in particular (as well as other online sources) to establish consumer sentiment. This valuable data should then be used to inform an organisation's marketing strategy. Social media also presents a powerful tool for turning delighted customers (who are expressive online) into advocates for an organisation. Lastly, social media allows for several new communication channels for an organisation, enabling customer communications and customer service to take place where the customer feels most comfortable.

Effective **web development and design** starts with customer needs, and should focus on the experience of the web user. Designing for customers first and foremost should give web visitors a seamless experience, presenting your goods and services to them without effort on their behalf.

Through all of the digital marketing tactics, effective **analytics** is the most useful CRM tool. It allows each channel to be measured on its merits, and the customers acquired by each channel can be analysed.

19.7 technology and CRM

Technology, and especially the technology enabled by the Internet, has had enormous repercussions for CRM. In many cases, technology has helped to streamline many CRM processes as well as to cut the costs of CRM initiatives.

19.7.1 Talking to Customers: Customer Service

It is amazing how much technology has changed the ways we communicate with each other. In the same way, it has changed the way that organisations and companies can communicate with us.

Email

Perhaps one of the first customer service developments to come from the Internet is customer service over email. It is standard for websites to have contact addresses as well as telephone numbers, adding an additional channel for customer contacts. Emails can also be automated to keep customers informed of the progress of a transaction, whether it is shipping goods bought online, or the progress of an insurance claim. Each action within an

organisation can trigger an automatic email, serving to ensure customers feel informed at every step.

Mobile

Similarly to automated emails, the mobile phone is also being used to keep customers informed of the progress of transactions. SMS messages can be automated in the same way that emails are, again ensuring customer peace of mind.

Call centres

Technology such as VoIP (voice over IP) means that voice calls can be routed cheaply over the Internet. Thousands of people keep in touch around the globe with services such as Skype (www.skype.com), and this has impacted call centres as well.

Using similar technology, phone calls can be routed to call centres in any location around the globe. Many companies in developed nations have located their customer call centres to developing nations, where staff and other overhead costs are far lower. The Internet means that these calls can be routed for a lower cost than in country calls, with minimal loss of call quality. That means that a UK customer calling Lastminute.com for example, to book a flight, could in fact be speaking to someone in India.

The staff in these call centres undergo extensive training on the culture of the people they will be speaking to, as well as on the ethos of the company they represent. Even though a customer is speaking to someone on another continent, it is imperative for the business that the experience matches their brand as closely as possible.

IM and chat rooms

Instant messengers (IM) allow fast, instant text-based chat. Services such as Windows Live Messenger, Google Talk and Jabber keep people around the world (and in the same room!) connected. IM can also be an effective customer service channel.

When potential customers are on a website, they may have very quick questions or concerns that they need to have addressed before proceeding with an order. Sending an email with these questions can mean a lengthy period before these questions are answered and they may be loath to pick up a phone to have the queries resolved. In instances such as these, IM services can easily, quickly and at low-cost, solve these challenges.

There are two main ways that IM is integrated onto websites. The first is customer initiated, and the second is initiated by a script on the web page being viewed.

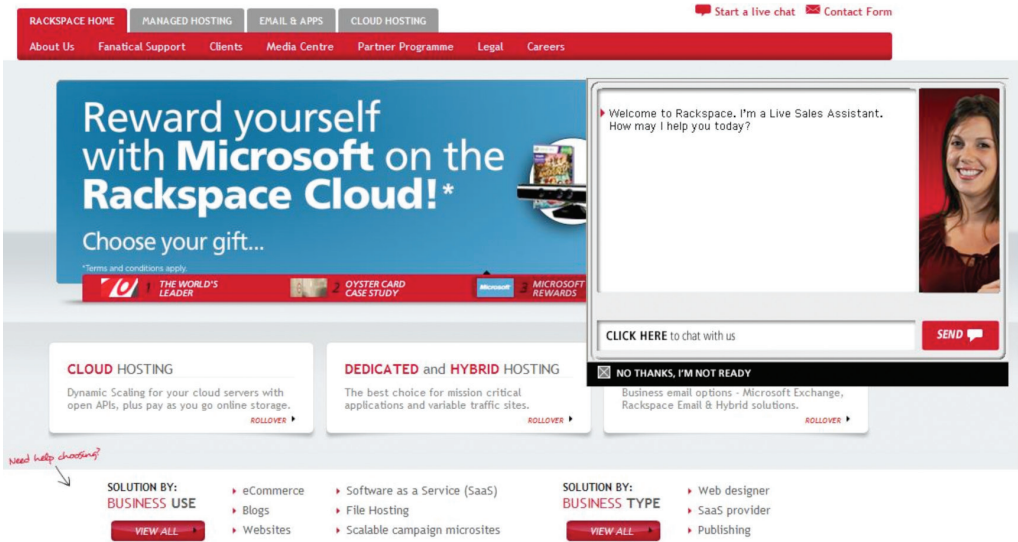


Figure 19.4 Rackspace offer live support through instant messenger on their website.

Customer initiated IM involves clearly indicating to a customer that the IM channel is available, while giving clear instructions on how to use it. Many free chat clients may be easily integrated in this way, such as Skype and Meebo (www.meebo.com).

A script can also be used to initiate a chat with a potential customer. When a web visitor has been on a web page for a fixed period of time without performing any action (such as clicking on a link), a window can appear in the browser asking if they would like to chat with someone about the products on offer. The web visitor can then either close the window and continue on their own, or can choose to chat. If the latter is chosen, a customer service representative will then commence to chat to the consumer.

This can be extremely effective for complicated or expensive purchases. At the point of decision-making, the organisation can provide personal support and reassurance.

19.7.2 Managing Interaction Data

CRM software can be used to automate lead and sales processes, and to collect customer information in a centralised place.

Organisations are large, and a customer may speak to any member of an organisation, depending on the nature of the communication. It would be extremely frustrating for the customer to have to explain all previous dealings

with the organisation with each communication, and it can be extremely frustrating for an organisation not to know who has spoken previously with a customer and what was dealt with.

Fortunately, there are many technological options which help to record all this information in one place, whether it be related to potential, current or past customers.

As well as enabling the recording of data, most of these services can also schedule elements of the sales process, and set reminders where appropriate for follow up action.

Some notable examples include Salesforce (www.salesforce.com), Genius (www.genius.com) and Highrise (www.highrisehq.com) from 37 Signals.

Bespoke technology tailored to business problems can have remarkable results. The chapter case study highlights this.

19.7.3 Analysing Data

One of the most powerful features of interactions and transactions over the Internet is that everything is tracked and recorded in server logs (see the *Web Analytics* and *Conversion Optimisation* chapters), providing a wealth of data that can be analysed to make business decisions.

Importantly for CRM, this means that the acquisition source of customers may be recorded, and analysed against sales data for customers from the source. This leads to a very accurate return on investment (ROI) calculation and indicates where CRM and marketing efforts should be focused.

The key to effective use of technology in CRM is integration. Ensure that all channels can be tracked, and that information is usable to all parties within an organisation. Knowing where your customers come from, but not what they purchase is pointless: these two metrics need to be compared in order to produce actionable insights.

19.8 VRM – a new way of looking at relationships

Vendor Relationship Management (VRM) is the reciprocal of CRM. VRM in this context describes an emerging, progressive school of thought, technology, tools and services that help customers to manage relationships with vendors. VRM tools and services are still very much in their infancy, as is the concept of VRM.

note

If you are interested in reading further about VRM, the article “VRM in a nutshell” is a great place to start: www.vrmlabs.net/vrm-in-a-nutshell.

VRM seeks to address the imbalance of power when it comes to customer and vendor relationships. Traditionally, vendors collect and hold information about a customer, and use it to get the most out of their relationship with the customer. For many vendors, “get the most out of the customer relationship” translates to making the most revenue for the lowest cost from a particular customer or group of customers. VRM notes that customers can be far better custodians of data that is very useful to vendors. For example, Amazon.com collects data about a customer’s purchasing and browsing history, and makes recommendations based on that history. However, the customer possesses information that Amazon.com doesn’t: e.g. the customer knows which books were purchased as gifts and therefore are not indicative of personal preferences.

The goal of VRM, however, is not to make sure that vendors have access to this information, instead it is to give customers the power over the information that is shared with vendors. Traditional CRM locks that data into a single relationship, while VRM seeks to give the customer the power to share pertinent data with vendors as she or he sees fit. These relationships can be controlled by the customer as opposed to the vendor.

VRM is a dynamic way of looking at customer–vendor relationships. Although the terms and tools may be new, the principles and the frustration with current practices are not.

For more information on VRM, visit the Project VRM wiki at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/projectvrm/Main_Page, read the blog for the project at <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/vrm/> or visit VRM Hub at <http://www.vrmhub.net> or VRM Labs at <http://www.vrmlabs.net>.

19.9 case study: StoraEnso and SynGro

StoraEnso, an international paper, packaging and wood products company, was limited in its ability to interact with customers. It held annual in-depth face-to-face interviews with customers in each of its global locations, and with facilities in over 35 countries, this was time consuming.

Since interviews were held only once a year, it only allowed the company to gather information for that particular time period. This information was stored on a system with a complicated user interface and limited reporting options, meaning the information was difficult to analyse.

In addition, there was no structure in place to maximise customer feedback or to implement changes from this feedback. There was also no way to communicate with customers to let them know when they had taken action on their feedback. Generally, their system was not integrated into their strategic planning processes.



Figure 19.5 *StoraEnso used digital tools to learn from its customers.*
 Source: *StoraEnso.com*

In order to address these challenges, in 2008 Enterprise Feedback Management (EFM) specialists in SynGro, implemented Value of Identifying Customer Expectations (VOICE), a real-time, multi-lingual solution. This was in line with StoraEnso's strategic direction and supported their new customer satisfaction and loyalty programme.

Essentially EFM gave the organisation the ability to centrally manage customer feedback information. Simultaneously, StoraEnso was able to distribute information across the enterprise in real-time, allowing them to provide key decision makers with important analytical data. This meant an increase in customer satisfaction and retention and, ultimately, a boost in profits. The system was also designed to include a closed loop feedback reporting tool which sent low scores or complaints data to the relevant people.

The system was rolled out in a phased country-by-country approach due to the vast reach and diversity of the organisation.

The EFM solution has led to a number of positive changes for StoraEnso:

- A simplified and streamlined customer feedback management process.
- The ability to reach a larger customer population and to collect, store and analyse their feedback on a user-friendly system.
- The opportunity for feedback to be gathered from multiple touch points such as via phone, email or web-based surveys.
- Communication with customers is initiated in their chosen language and feedback is then converted back to English for analysis at a central point.

The customer experience is further enhanced with knowledge management, action orientation and collaboration features included in the system to encourage focused engagement throughout the whole organisation.

case study questions

1. In what way has technology changed StoraEnso's communication channels with its customers?
2. What challenges do organisations face in the absence of centrally stored and accessible customer information?
3. How could the EFM solution implemented by StoraEnso assist them in other areas of digital marketing, such as market research?

chapter questions

1. How do you think CRM changed or evolved as social media rose to popularity?
2. Why do customers respond so positively to personalised communication?
3. What ethical problems do you think customers might raise with regards to behavioural tracking?

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further reading

- <http://www.insidecrm.com/> - This useful website regularly posts white papers and reports breaking down updates and developments in the field of CRM.
- <http://www.creatingcustomerevangelists.com/about.asp> - This useful blog regularly features guest writers and experts in the field of social media and CRM.
- <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/vrm/> - A research and development project of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, this blog was created with the aim of encouraging development via useful tools, and to conduct and publish research on VRM.
- <http://www.cluetrain.com/> - Home of the Cluetrain Manifesto, a set of guiding principles geared towards conducting business in the digital world.

optimise

introduction to optimise

Planning, research and strategy are important for executing digital marketing campaigns that resonate with audiences, drive traffic and help you to build relationships. As part of executing these plans and strategies, you need to create digital assets, and then use various channels to drive traffic to those assets, and build relationships with your visitors.

As you are doing all this, it's important to know: is it actually working? And how might it all work better?

This is where **Optimise** comes in: the process by which we track, analyse and optimise our digital assets and campaigns for the best results. (Yes, that's Track, Analyse, Optimise, or TAO, so you'll never forget it.)

As Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google, is reported to have said: "The Internet will transform advertising because of its trackability, not its beauty." It's because most actions online are recorded, whether in a logfile or in a cookie, that we can build a rich, data-driven picture of how our digital assets and online campaigns are performing. It's because digital allows us to iterate and release new versions of advertising or web pages rapidly that we can use this data to test and improve.

With user friendly reporting interfaces and free, powerful web analytics tools like Google Analytics, there is no excuse for not knowing what's happening in your campaigns. The chapter on **Web Analytics** will help you with the standard definitions you need, as well as setting objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) so you know what it is that you need to measure.

However, it is easy to rely on web analytics tools to report the "what" without applying your brain to understand the "why" and importantly, "what next".

Getting into a routine of using web analytics data to understand how your visitors are behaving and how you might influence that behaviour is what conversion optimisation is about. You need to use the web analytics data not just to report on how campaigns and digital assets are performing, but also to understand how to make them perform better.

The chapter on **Conversion Optimisation** takes you through the steps for turning that data into something useful: more conversions of visitors to your site into active customers.

What's inside: You will learn about the different types of **web analytics packages**, and the benefits and challenges of each. The **metrics for web analytics** are introduced as well as an approach to **understanding and analysing web data**. **Single page analysis packages** and **approach** are also explained.

20.1 introduction

Picture the scene: you've opened up a new fashion retail outlet in the trendiest shopping centre in town. You've spent a small fortune on advertising and branding. You've gone to great lengths to ensure that you're stocking all of the prestigious brands. Come opening day your store is inundated with visitors and potential customers. **And yet, you are hardly making any sales.** Could it be because you have one cashier for every hundred customers? Or maybe it's the fact that the smell of your freshly painted walls chases customers away before they complete a purchase. While it can be difficult to isolate and track the factors affecting your revenue in this fictional store, move it online and you have a wealth of resources available to assist you with **tracking, analysing** and **optimising** your performance.

To a marketer, the Internet offers more than just new avenues of creativity. By its very nature, it allows you to track each click to your site and through your site. It takes the guesswork out of pinpointing the successful elements of a campaign, and can show you very quickly what's not working. It all comes down to knowing where to look, knowing what to look for, and knowing what to do with the information you find.

20.2 history

Testing, analysing and optimising are not new to marketing. Being able to gauge the success of any campaign is crucial to growth.

Early web analytics packages came to the fore in the mid 1990s; a couple of years after the first Mosaic browser was launched. Early analysis reflected the nature of the early web, focusing only on hits with some very basic click stream analysis. With one page websites being the norm, it was enough to know how many clicks came to the website. Traffic meant you were doing well. You can still see hit counters on some websites today. The websites you find these on usually look as sophisticated as this tool.

However, as websites became more complex, and as more people had access to the Internet, better analysis became more important. Measuring hits was, and is, not enough. In fact, measuring hits is a fairly meaningless task. Web analytics split into two types of tools: page tags and log files. Both continue to become more sophisticated, capturing information about visitors to a website, and recording detailed information related to their time on a website.

There are several log file analysis tools which cost nothing to use. Sophisticated page tag web analytics became available for free when Google bought Urchin in March 2005 and launched Google Analytics as a free service. Are you wondering what the difference is between page tag and log file analysis? Don't worry, it's coming!

20.3 key terms and concepts

term	definition
A/B Split Test	Testing two variables for statistically significant influence.
Click path	The clicks taken by a visitor to a website in one visit.
Conversion	A visitor completing a target action.
Conversion funnel	A defined path that visitors should take to reach the final objective.
Count	Raw figures captured for analysis, these are the most basic web analytics metric.
Event	A step a visitor takes in the conversion process.
Goal	The defined action that visitors should perform on a website or the purpose of the website.
Heat map	A data visualisation tool that shows levels of activity on a web page in different colours, reds and yellows showing the most activity and blues and violets the least.
Hit	Every request to the server is recorded as a hit, mistakenly used in web analytics as an indication of a successful website.
JavaScript	A popular scripting language also used in web analytics for page tagging.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A metric that indicates whether a website is achieving its goals.
Log files	Text files created on the server each time a click takes place, capturing all activity on the website.
Multivariate test	Testing many variables to determine statistically significant influences on outcomes.
Page tags	JavaScript files embedded on a web page and executed by the browser.
Ratio	An interpretation of data captured, a ratio can be between counts, ratios or a ratio and a count metric.
Referrer	The URL that originally generated the request for the current page
Segmentation	Filtering visitors into distinct groups based on characteristics so as to analyse visits.
Visitor	An individual visiting a website that is not a search engine spider or a script.

20.4 how it works

20.4.1 Tracking and Collecting Data

Currently, there are two main approaches for collecting web analytics data: **log file analysis** and **page tagging**.

Log file analysis software reads the records, called log files, on the web server, which record all clicks which take place on the server. Web servers have always stored all the clicks which take place in a log file, so the software interprets data which has always been available. A new line is written in a log file with each new request. For example, clicking on a link, an Ajax call or submitting a form will each result in a new line being written.

Page tagging, on the other hand, sends information to a third-party server, where statistics can be generated. The browser executes JavaScript code which communicates with the tracking software.

Pixel tracking can be used to track email campaigns. Here, a tiny 1 pixel by 1 pixel is placed in the email. When you load the images in the email, you will also load the tiny image which tracks your activity.

What you should know:

Log file analysis

- Log files are normally produced by web servers, so the raw data is readily available. Page tagging, however, requires changes to the website.
- Log files are very accurate – they record every click. Page tagging can be less accurate. If a user's browser does not support JavaScript, for example, no information will be captured.
- Log files are in a standard format, so it is possible to switch vendors and still be able to analyse historical data. Page tagging is proprietary to each vendor, so switching can mean losing historical data.
- Log files record visits from search engine spiders – useful for search engine optimisation.
- Log files record failed requests, whereas page tagging only shows successful requests.

Page tagging

- JavaScript makes it easier to capture more information (e.g. products purchased, or screen size of a user's browser). You can use log file analysis to capture this information, but it will involve modifying the URLs.
- Page tagging can report on events, such as interactions with a Flash movie, something log file analysis cannot.

- Page tagging can be used by companies which do not run their own web servers.
- Page tagging service providers usually offer a greater level of support. This is because it is a third-party service, whereas log file analysis software is often managed in-house.

Due to the different methods of collecting data, the raw figures produced by the two services will differ. Sometimes, both are used to analyse a website and raw figures not matching up should not be a problem. It is in the interpretation of these figures that you will be able to understand how effective your digital marketing efforts are.

Website analytics packages can be used to measure most, if not all, digital marketing campaigns. Website analysis should always account for the various campaigns being run. For example, generating high traffic volumes by employing various digital marketing tactics like SEO, PPC and email marketing can prove to be a pointless and costly exercise if the visitors are leaving your site without achieving one (or more) of your website's goals. Conversion optimisation aims to convert as many of a website's visitors as possible into active customers.

20.4.2 Setting Objectives, Goals, and KPIs

The key to the success of any website or online campaign is that it is designed with clearly defined objectives in mind. These will be used to measure the success of the website or campaign, and are crucial to maintaining focus within online activities. Sometimes, words like "objective" or "goal" can be used in different situations with slightly different meanings. For the sake of clarity, this chapter will use them as described below, unless otherwise indicated.

The **objective** of a website or online campaign is aligned with the strategic outcomes of the business. The objective of a campaign may be to create awareness for a new business or it might be to increase sales of a product. Sometimes campaign objectives are referred to as goals, although goals can have another meaning in web analytics.

The **goal** of a website or campaign in web analytics refers to an action that a user takes on a website or a type of user behaviour. This action could be making a purchase, signing up for a newsletter, or viewing a certain number of pages in a visit. Goals related to visitor behaviour such as time spent on site or page-views per visit are sometimes referred to as engagement goals. Goals are usually aligned with the business objectives.

note

Caching is when a browser stores some of the information for a web page, so it can retrieve the page more quickly when you return to it. If a web page is cached by your browser, when you look at the page again, it will not send a request to the web server. This means that that particular visit will not show in the log files. Page tagging, however, would capture this visit. But, some browsers do not support JavaScript, and page tagging would not capture those visits. This is why there is often a discrepancy in the numbers reported by the two services.

Key performance indicators or **KPIs** are metrics which indicate whether objectives are being met. There are many metrics to be analysed, and so determining which are important will help to focus on what really matters to a particular campaign.

The objective of a website or campaign may depend on the type of industry, but usually it will be an action which results in revenue for the company. The goal of a website is also intrinsically linked to the action that you want visitors to perform.

Although a website has an ultimate goal, the process of achieving that goal can be broken down into several steps. These are called **events** or micro-conversions. Analysing each step in the process is called **funnel analysis** or path analysis and is critical to understanding where problems in the conversion process may lie. The clicks a visitor makes once landed on a site, whether they follow the desired steps or not, are referred to as a **click path**.

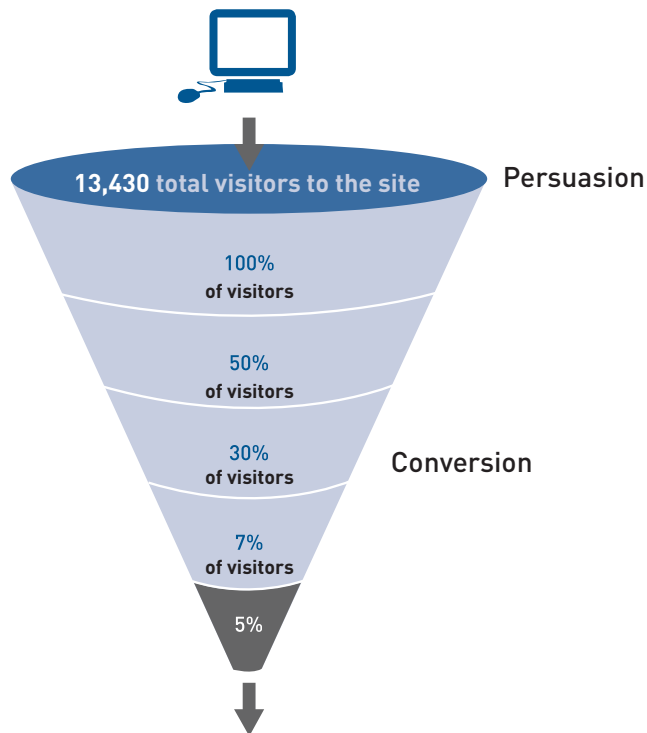


Figure 20.1 An example of a conversion funnel.

For example, on a hotel website, the ultimate goal is that visitors to the site make a booking on the website with a credit card.

Each step in the process is an event which can be analysed as a conversion point.

Event 1: Perform a search for available dates for hotels in the desired area.

Event 2: Check prices and amenities for available hotels.

Event 3: Select a hotel and go to checkout.

Event 4: Enter personal and payment details and confirm booking (conversion).

One expects fewer users at each step that's why it's called a funnel. Increasing the number of visitors who progress from one step to the next will go a long way to improving the overall conversion rate of the site.

There are also other pointers, or indicators, of whether you are achieving your goals.

Here are some examples of objectives, goals and KPIs for different websites:

Hospitality ecommerce site, such as www.expedia.com

Objective: increase bookings

Objective: decrease marketing expenses

Goal: make a reservation online

KPIs:

conversion rate

cost per visitor

average order value

News and content sites, such as www.news24.com

Objective: increase readership and level of interest

Objective: increase time visitors spend on website

Goal: a minimum time on site

KPIs:

length of visit

average time spent on website

percentage of returning visitors

KPIs help you to look at the factors you can influence. For example, if your objective is to increase revenue, you could look at ways of increasing your conversion rate (that is the number of visitors who purchase something). One way of increasing your conversion rate could be to offer a discount. So, you would have more sales, but probably a lower average order value. Or, you could look at ways of increasing the average order value, so the conversion rate would stay the same, but you increase the revenue from each conversion.

Once you have established your objectives, goals and KPIs, you need to be able to track the data that will help you analyse how you are performing, and will indicate how you can optimise your website or campaign.

note

Events and KPIs are not the same thing. Events can be seen as steps towards a goal and are usually an action performed by a visitor. KPIs are indicators that the website's goals are being met.

KPIs and events break down the factors and steps that can be influences so as to achieve the goals of the website. They allow you to see on a micro level what is affecting performance on a macro level.

What information is captured

KPIs are the metrics which help you understand how well you are meeting your objectives. A metric is a defined unit of measurement. Definitions can vary between various web analytics vendors depending on technology and the approach to gathering data, but the standard definitions are provided here.

Web analytics metrics are either a:

- **count** – these are the raw figures captured that will be used for analysis.
- **ratio** – this is an interpretation of the data that is counted.

discussion

Why would you want to look at the activity of a single visitor?
Why would you want to segment the traffic for analysis?

In analysis, metrics can be applied to three different spheres:

- **aggregate** – all traffic to the website for a defined period of time.
- **segmented** – a subset of all traffic according to a specific filter, such as by campaign (PPC) or visitor type (new visitor vs. returning visitor).
- **individual** – the activity of a single visitor for a defined period of time.

Here are some of the key metrics you will need to get started on with website analytics:

Building block terms:

- **Hit** – a request to the server (and a fairly meaningless number on its own).
- **Page** – unit of content (so downloads and Flash files can be defined as a page).
- **Page views** – the number of times a page was successfully requested.
- **Visit or session** – an interaction by an individual with a website consisting of one or more page views within a specified period of time.
- **Unique visitors** – the number of individual people visiting the website one or more times within a set period of time. Each individual is only counted once.
 - o **new visitor** – a unique visitor who visits the website for the first time ever in the period of time being analysed.
 - o **repeat visitor** – a unique visitor with two or more visits within the time period being analysed.
 - o **return visitor** – a unique visitor who is not a new visitor.

note

A repeat visitor may be either a new visitor or a return visitor.

These are the most basic web metrics. They tell you how much traffic your website is receiving. Looking at repeat and returning visitors can tell you about

how your website features in terms of creating loyalty. As well as growing overall visitor numbers, a website needs to grow the number of visitors who come back. An exception might be a support website – repeat visitors could indicate that the website has not been successful in solving the visitor's problem. Each website needs to be analysed based on its purpose.

Visit characterisation:

- **Entry page** – the first page of a visit.
- **Landing page** – the page intended to identify the beginning of the user experience resulting from a defined marketing effort.
- **Exit page** – the last page of a visit.
- **Visit duration** – the length of time in a session.
- **Referrer** – the URL that originally generated the request for the current page.
 - **internal referrer** – a URL that is part of the same website.
 - **external referrer** – a URL that is outside of the website.
 - **search referrer** – the URL has been generated by a search function.
 - **visit referrer** – the URL that originated from a particular visit.
 - **original referrer** – the URL that sent a new visitor to the website.
- **Clickthrough** – the number of times a link was clicked by a visitor.
- **Clickthrough rate** – the number of times a link was clicked divided by the number of times it was seen (impressions).
- **Page views per visit** – the number of page views in a reporting period divided by the number of visits in that same period period to get an average of how many pages are being viewed per visit.

These are some of the metrics that tell you how visitors reach your website, and how they move through the website. The way that a visitor navigates a website is called a click path. Looking at the referrers, both external and internal, allows you to gauge a click path that visitors take.

Content characterization:

- **Page exit ratio** – number of exits from a page divided by total number of page views of that page.
- **Single page visits** – visits that consist of one page, even if that page was viewed a number of times.
- **Bounces (or single page view visits)** – visits consisting of a single page view.
- **Bounce rate** – single page view visits divided by entry pages.

When a visitor views a page, they have two options: leave the website, or view another page on the website. These metrics tell you how visitors react to

note

A search referrer, visit referrer and original referrer are all external referrers. An original referrer will send new visitors to the website. The visit referrer is for returning visitors.

your content. Bounce rate can be one of the most important metrics that you measure. There are a few exceptions, but a high bounce rate usually means high dissatisfaction with a web page.

note

For the most up to date definitions, visit www.webanalyticsassociation.org to download the latest definitions in PDF format.

Conversion metrics:

- **Event** – a recorded action that has a specific time assigned to it by the browser or the server.
- **Conversion** – a visitor completing a target action.

Other metrics which apply to digital marketing tactics include:

- **Impression** – each time an advert or a page is served.
- **Open** – each email that is deemed open, usually if the images are loaded an email is considered open.

In order to test the success of your website, you need to remember the TAO of conversion optimisation:

Track
Analyse
Optimise

Now that you know what tracking is, you can use your objectives and KPIs, you can choose what metrics you'll be tracking. You'll then need to analyse these results, and then take appropriate actions. And the testing begins again!

20.4.3 Analysing Data

A number is just a number until you can interpret it. Typically, it is not the raw figures that you will be looking at, but what they can tell you about how your users are interacting with your website. Because your web analytics package will never be able to provide you with 100% accurate results, analysis needs to look at trends and changes overtime in order for you to understand your brand's performance.

How to analyse

Avinash Kaushik, author of *Web Analytics: An Hour A Day*, recommends a three prong approach to web analytics:

- **Analysing behaviour data that infers the intent of a website's visitors. For example why are people on our website?**
- **Analysing outcomes metrics that shows how many visitors performed the goal actions on a website. For example are visitors performing the actions we want them to?**
- **Testing and analysing data that tells us about the user experience. What are the patterns of user behaviour? How can we influence them to optimise/achieve our objectives?**

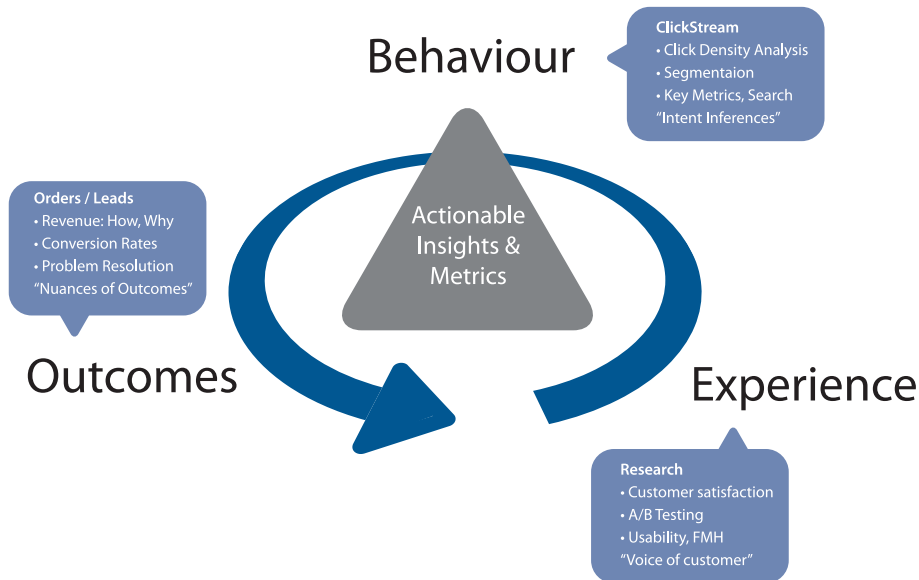


Figure 20.2 Avinash Kaushik's three prong approach to web analytics
www.kaushik.net.

Behaviour data: intent

Web users' behaviour can indicate a lot about their intent. Looking at referral URLs and search terms used to find the website can tell you a great deal about what problems visitors are expecting your site to solve.

Click density analysis, segmentation and metrics that define the visit and content, can all be used to gauge the intent of your visitors.

A crucial, and often overlooked, part of this analysis is that of internal search. Internal search refers to the searches that users perform on the website, of the website's content. While a great deal of time is spent analysing and optimising external search – using search engines to reach the website in question – analysing internal search goes a long way to determining how effectively a website is in delivering solutions to visitors.

Internal and external search data is likely to be very different. Internal search data can go a long way to exposing weaknesses in site navigation and the internal search itself, and can expose gaps in inventory on which a website can capitalise.

For example, consider the keywords a user might use when searching for a hotel website, and keywords that might be used by a the user when on the website.

Keywords to search for a hotel website:

- Cape town hotel
- Bed and breakfast cape town

Once on the website, the user might use the site search function to find out further information. Keywords they might use include:

- Table mountain
- Pets
- Babysitting service

Analytics tools can show what keywords users search for, what pages they visit after searching and, of course, whether they search again with a variation of those keywords or different ones.

Outcomes: meeting expectations

At the end of the day, you want people who visit your website to perform an action which increases the website’s revenue. Analysis of goals and KPIs indicate where there is room for improvement. Look at user intent to establish how your website meets the user’s goals, and if they match with the website goals. Look at user experience to determine how outcomes can be influenced.

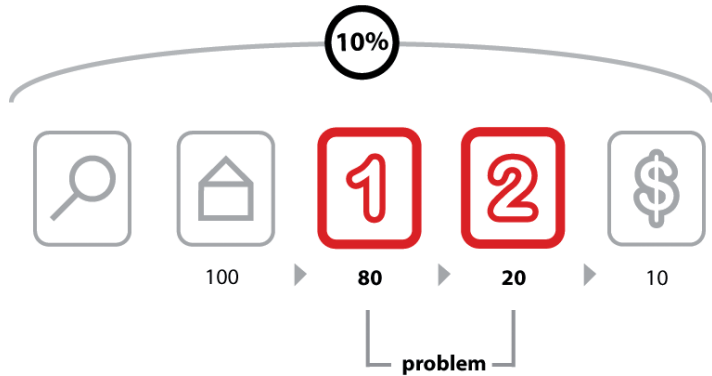


Figure 20.3 The above image shows how analysing each event can show where the website is not meeting expectations.

After performing a search, 100 visitors land on the home page of a website. From there, 80 visitors visit the first page towards the goal. This event has an 80% conversion rate. 20 visitors take the next step. This event has a 25% conversion rate. 10 visitors convert into paying customers. This event has a 50% conversion rate. The conversion rate of all visitors who performed the search is 10%, but breaking this up into events we can analyse and improve the conversion rate of each event.

Experience: why users acted the way they did, and how that can be influenced

In order to determine the factors that influence user experience, it is necessary to test and determine the patterns of user behaviour. Understanding why users behave in a certain way on your website will show you how that behaviour can be influenced so as to increase your successful outcomes. This is covered in the next chapter on *Conversion Optimisation*.

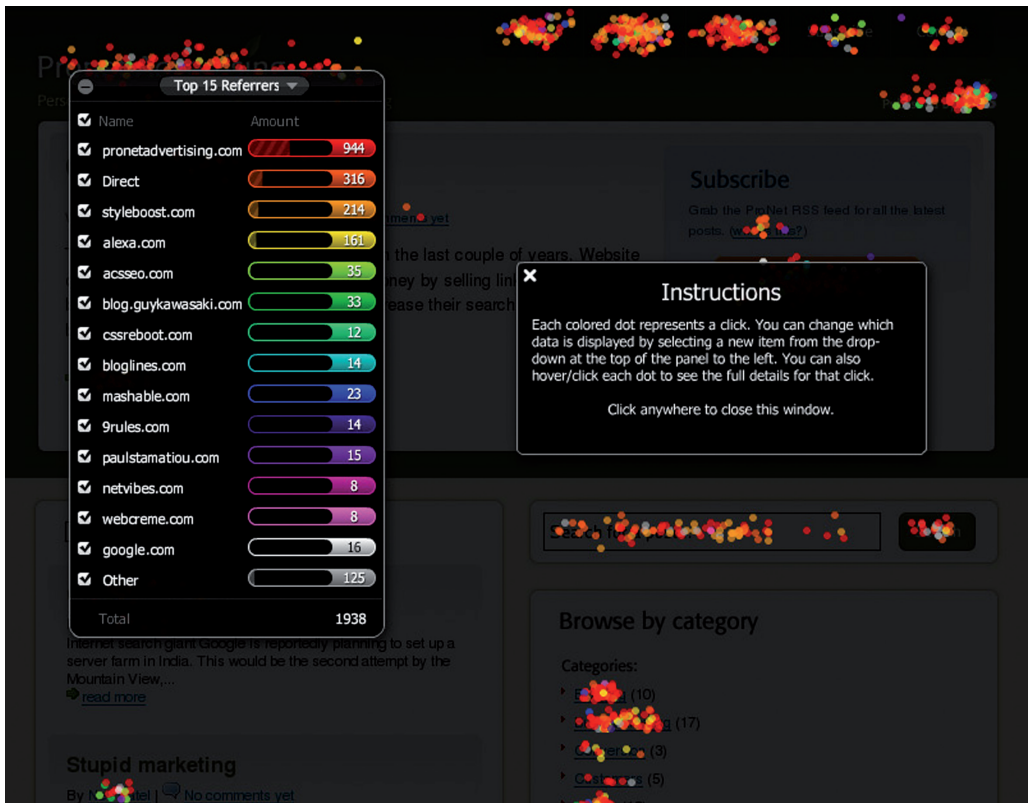


Figure 20.4 CrazyEgg can produce information that will help you understand where users are clicking on your website.

Single page heat maps

Companies such as Crazy Egg (www.crazyegg.com) have software that can show you exactly where users click on a web page, regardless of whether they are clicking on links or not.

It produces information that helps you know what areas of a website are clickable, but attract few or no clicks, and what areas are not clickable but have users attempting to click there. This can show you what visual clues on your web page influence where your visitors click, and this can be used to optimise the click path of your visitors.

There are many factors that could be preventing your visitors from achieving specific end goals. From the tone of the copy to the colour of the page, everything on your website may affect conversions. Possible factors are often so glaringly obvious that one tends to miss them, or so small that they are dismissed as trivial. Changing one factor may result in other unforeseen consequences and it is vital to ensure that we don't jump to the wrong conclusions.

Segmentation

Every visitor to a website is different, but there are some ways we can characterise groups of users, and analyse metrics for each group. This is called segmentation.

Some segments include:

Referral URL

Users who arrive at your site via search engines, those who type in the URL directly and those who come from a link in an online newspaper article are all likely to behave differently. As well as conversion rates, click path and exit pages are important metrics to consider. Consider the page on which these visitors land to enter your website – can anything be done to improve their experience?

Landing pages

Users who enter your website through different pages can behave very differently. What can you do to affect the page on which they are landing, or what elements of the landing page can be changed to influence outcomes?

Connection speed, operating system, browser

Consider the effects of technology on the behaviour of your users. High bounce rate for low bandwidth users, for example, could indicate that your site is taking too long to load. Visitors who use open source technology might expect different things from your website to other visitors. Different browsers might show your website differently – how does this affect these visitors?

Geographical location

Do users from different countries, provinces or towns behave differently on your website? How can you optimise user experience for these different groups?

First time visitors

How is the click path of a first time visitor different to a returning visitor? What parts of the website are more important to first time visitors?

20.5 tools of the trade

The very first thing you need when it comes to web analytics is a web analytics tool for gathering data. Some are free and some are paid for. You will need

to determine which package best serves your needs. Bear in mind that it is possible to switch vendors with log file analysis software without losing historical data, but it is not as easy to do so with page tagging software.

Below are some leading providers:

- Google Analytics (page tagging analysis) - www.google.com/analytics
- ClickTracks (log file and page tagging) www.clicktracks.com
- AWStats (log file analysis) - awstats.sourceforge.net
- Webalizer (log file analysis) - www.mrunix.net/webalizer
- SiteCatalyst - <https://sitecatalyst.omniture.com/login/>

When it comes to running split tests, if you don't have the technical capacity to run these in-house, there are a number of third-party services that can host these for you. Google's Website Optimizer (www.google.com/websiteoptimizer) can help you do just that.

A basic split test calculator is available at www.usereffect.com/split-test-calculator.

Crazy Egg (www.crazyegg.com) is a strange sounding name, but this tool can help you to see exactly where visitors are clicking on a web page.

Home	About	Services	Contact	E-book	Blog									
<h2 style="color: #e67e22;">Split Test Calculator & Decision Tool</h2> <p>The calculator below can be used to interpret the results of a usability-oriented split (A/B) test. This is a basic scenario where you have two groups of <i>Visitors</i> (A & B) who each get to see one version of your website and for whom you track the number of <i>Conversions</i> or <i>Goals</i> (purchases, downloads, click-throughs, etc.).</p> <p>Simply enter the number of unique <i>Visitors</i> for each group and total <i>Goals</i> or <i>Conversions</i> for that group below, and click [Calculate] for your results.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Visitors:</th> <th>Goals:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Group A:</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group B:</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Calculate</p> <p>This calculator is based on the Chi-Square (χ^2) statistic. There are, admittedly, other Chi-Square calculators out there, so what makes this one different?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usability-oriented language • Automatic calculation of Conversion Rates • Clear explanations of results • Confidence levels for significant results • Suggestions for tests that haven't reached significance <p>If you have any questions or comments, please contact peter@usereffect.com.</p>							Visitors:	Goals:	Group A:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Group B:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Visitors:	Goals:												
Group A:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>												
Group B:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>												
©2010 User Effect, Inc. • Home • About • Services • Contact • E-book • Blog • Archive														

Figure 20.5 An example of a split test tool.

20.6 pros and cons

Tracking, analysing and optimising is vital to the success of any marketing efforts, and even more so to digital marketing efforts. digital marketing allows for easy and fast tracking, and the ability to optimise frequently.

However, it can be easy to become fixated on figures instead of using them to optimise campaign growth. Generally, macro, or global metrics should be looked at before starting to analyse micro elements of a website.

Testing variables is vital to success. Results always need to be statistically analysed, and marketers should let these numbers make the decisions. Never assume the outcome – wait for the numbers to inform you.

20.7 summary

The ability to track user behaviour on the Internet allows for analysis of every level of a digital campaign, which should lead to improved results over time.

The foundation of successful analysis and optimisation is to determine campaign and business goals upfront and use these to determine KPIs for that campaign. Analysing metrics which are not indicators of success will detract from timely optimisation.

Web analytic packages come in two flavours: log file analysis and page tagging analysis, although some packages combine both methods.

Metrics are either:

- **Counts**
- **Ratios**
- **KPIs, which are either counts or ratios**

Data can be analysed to infer user behaviour and intent, outcomes achieved and user experience. Testing to optimise user experience can demonstrate ways to influence user behaviour so that more successful outcomes can be achieved.

Testing is covered in the next chapter and can be performed via:

- **Listening labs**
- **A/B split testing**
- **Multivariate testing**
- **One page analytics**

Segmenting the audience allows for analysis and optimising for specific groups of users.

20.8 the bigger picture

Tracking, analysing and optimising are fundamental to any digital marketing activity. The Internet allows for sophisticated data gathering, so it is possible to track almost every detail of any campaign.

Most analytics packages can be used across all digital marketing activities, allowing for an integrated approach to determining the success of campaigns. While it is important to analyse each campaign on its own merits, the Internet allows for a holistic approach to these activities. The savvy marketer will be able to see how campaigns affect and enhance each other.

The connected nature of the Internet has made it possible to reach out to far greater audiences, and for people around the world to interact, create and share. The same connected nature is what makes it possible for website owners to track and analyse how users around the world interact with their website, and to optimise it for those users.

chapter questions

1. Why is a "hit" not strictly a useful metric?
2. What would you learn from a single page heat map?
3. What is the difference between a goal and a KPI?

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Accessed May 2011

further reading

- *Web Analytics 2.0* by Avinash Kaushik – if you are looking to get started in web analytics, you can't go wrong with this book by Avinash Kaushik
- www.kaushik.net/avinash - Avinash Kaushik is an analytics evangelist, and his regular insight is essential reading for any digital marketer

What's inside: An **introduction** to the useful world of **Conversion Optimisation**. **Key Terms and Concepts** are included to help you understand the **process** as well as **data collection methods and steps** for improving on the different **digital marketing tactics**. This chapter tells you how to make sure you are getting the most out of your digital marketing **investment**.

21.1 introduction

Let's return to a real world example to help explain what conversion optimisation is. Think of a real world shoe store. When laying out the store, a lot of care has most likely been taken in determining where to place displays, mirrors, chairs and the till. However, there is no way of easily determining if the layout is the best option.

For example, the till might be by the front of the store. It might be worth testing to see if moving the till to the middle of the store affected sales. In the real world example, this would require tracking sales over a period of time with the till in the front of the store, then shutting down for a few days while the store is reorganised, and then tracking sales with the new layout. All a little impractical.

However, if we have an online store, we can just show slightly (or very) different versions of pages of our website to visitors, and track how different versions affect sales. We don't need to shut down our website to create new versions, and we can see the 'real-time' results. The process of testing websites in this way is called conversion optimisation. This chapter will take you through the steps in a conversion optimisation process, helping you to understand how to make things work better.

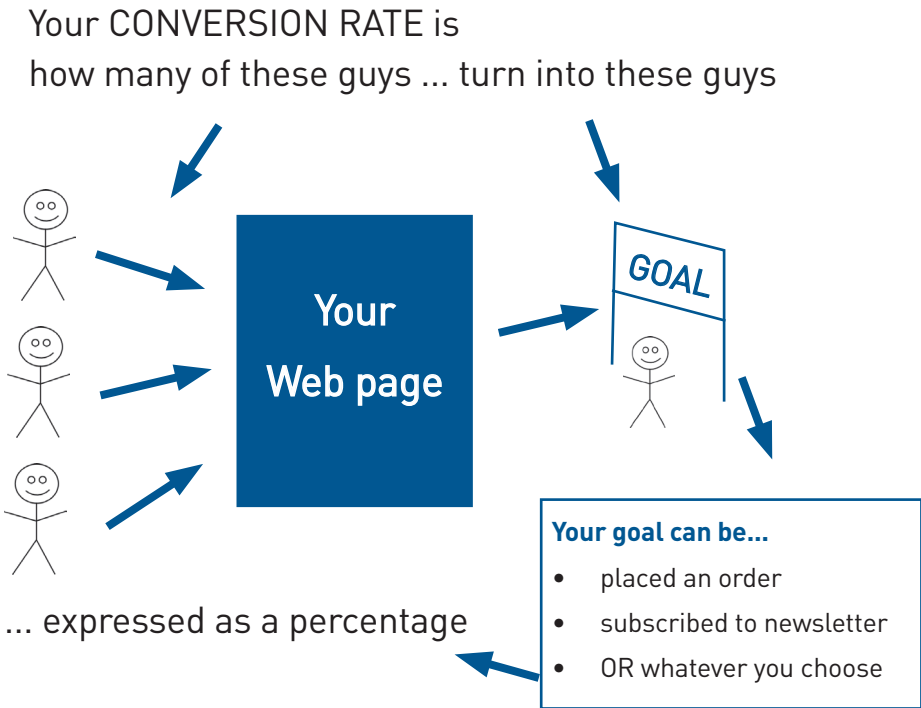


Figure 21.1 An image explaining what a conversion rate is.

21.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
A/B test	Also known as a spot test, it involves testing two or more versions to see which performs better.
Call to action	The copy that tells someone what to do, e.g. sign up, buy now
Click path	The journey a user takes through a website.
Conversion	The action that the website wants the user to take. Usually a conversion results in revenue for the website in some way. Conversions include signing up to a newsletter or purchasing a product.
Conversion rate	The number of conversions divided by the number of visitors expressed as a percentage.
Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)	The acronym used to describe conversion optimisation.
Funnel	In web analytics or conversion optimisation, a funnel refers to an established set of steps a user should take in reaching a goal, such as making a purchase.
Hypothesis	A statement that is being tested.
Landing page	The first page a visitor sees on a site. Usually it is specific to a campaign being run.
Micro-conversion	A small conversion in the path to a conversion, such as going from step 1 to step 2 in a checkout process.
Multivariate Test	Testing combinations of variations to see what performs better.
Null Hypothesis	The default or general positions.
Split test	Also A/B test.

21.3 how it works

Proper planning is important to achieving success with your conversion optimisation. Whatever the outcome of your test, if you've planned appropriately and you document carefully, you'll always learn something.

The basic approach to conversion optimisation is:

1. Gather data
2. Analyse data
3. Fix anything that's broken
4. Design tests
5. Run tests
6. Report and repeat

1. Gather data

The very first step is to gather data about the site you are testing so that you can make smart decisions about what to test and how. There are many sources that can be utilised. What you use depends on the nature of the site that you are testing. Of course, you also need to know the business that you are testing for: what is it that you want website visitors to do?

Web analytics data: existing web analytics data can be used to determine which pages in your site should be tested. You can also gather data about particular pages on your site using tools like Crazy Egg (www.crazyegg.com) or ClickTale (www.clicktale.com).

Figure 21.2 CrazyEgg is one of the tools that can help you gather data.

User data: user labs or simple site surveys (www.kissmetrics.com is a useful tool for these) can also be used to add qualitative data to the quantitative data gathered using web analytics tools.

Customer service: if you are running tests for a site where users also speak to customer service, you can gather data about the site from customer service representatives. They should have information on common reasons which cause visitors to make a phone call.

2. Analyse

Having gathered data, you need to analyse it intelligently so that you can start designing tests.

There are some key questions that you need to answer at this stage.

What should people be doing on the site?

This is where we look at the actual conversion. Usually, this is an action taken by a user that increases revenue for a business. There are obvious conversions we can look at: make an order or complete a lead generation form. However, it can also be useful to understand less obvious conversions, or micro-conversions.

A test could be run to see what would reduce the bounce rate of a page. The aim of an online bookstore is to sell books, but they could also test to increase newsletter signups, and focus on selling books later. Micro-conversions can also refer to the path to conversion. Often, there are established steps a visitor should take in the conversion process. Conversion optimisation can look at each step in the process.

Knowing what actions or conversions you are testing is about knowing the business and its website well.

Who is coming to the site, and why?

To understand who is coming to the website, and why, you need to look at data that tells you about your visitors and about how they got to your website.

Visitor information includes their location and richer demographic information (such as age and income), if available.

To understand why these visitors come to your website, you need to be able to analyse your sources of traffic. The search keywords sending you traffic should tell you something about the intent of your visitors, for example.

What are they doing on your site?

Of course, now you need to understand what your visitors are doing, and why they're not doing what you want them to do. Here you need to look at metrics like bounce rate and exit rate for important pages. As well as looking at your overall conversion rate, look at the steps in the process and see where those drop offs occur.

Look at which pages are the most visited landing pages, especially as this might not be the home page. Look to see which pages are exit pages, and determine if those should be the last pages a user sees on your site. You can use internal site search information to see if visitors are looking for particular information on your website.

You're using the data you have gathered to build a picture about what visitors are doing on your website, what pages are the most important during these visits, and what they are not doing on your website that you want them to do.

3. Fix anything that's broken

As part of your analysis, you might have identified problems which can be fixed without testing. Before you carry on, you should fix these! You should also try to understand if there is traffic coming to your site that is not relevant, and try to segment that traffic from your calculations.

For example, if you have a beautifully designed website that sells custom couches, but is featured in a website design gallery, you might get a lot of traffic that is only coming to look at your site, and not to buy couches.

4. Design tests

By now you should know what areas of your site need testing, so it's time to design tests.

Establish the null hypothesis, the alternatives and the expected outcome, and get testing!



Figure 21.3 XKCD, a popular web comic's take on the null hypothesis.

Source: XKCD <http://xkcd.com/892/>

5. Run tests

Implement the tracking code needed to run your tests. Most testing software uses cookies to ensure that return visitors see the same version of the test they saw initially. You will also need to put tracking code on your conversion page. Before taking your test live, test to make sure that the tracking code does not conflict with any other code on your website.

If everything checks out, take your test live, and wait for the data to collect. Check in regularly to see how the test is proceeding, and wait for a statistically significant outcome.

6. Report and repeat

When you have a result, it's time to report on it. Refer back to your null hypothesis to determine if the outcome was as expected. In your report, you should include why it was as expected, or why not.

Implement the better performing solution, and plan your next test. There is always something you can improve.

note

What happens if there is no result? Sometimes, there is no change in the conversion rate, or the change is so small it will take a long time to ascertain whether or not it is statistically significant. It might be better to test something with a bigger difference, or to try to send more traffic to the page in question. You've still learned something though!

21.4 designing tests

In order to design tests successfully, you need to know what you can test, how you can test, and what sort of time periods you are looking at for testing. If it's your first time doing conversion optimisation, you should start with simple and quick tests in order to get a feel for the process before embarking on more complicated tests.

21.5 types of tests

When we talk about conversion rate optimisation, we are usually referring to running split tests. A split test is when we show different versions of a web page to groups of users and determine which one performed better.

We can run **A/B tests**. Here each version being tested is different to all the others. A/B tests often involve just two versions being tested: the original and an alternate. There can also be many alternates being tested.

A/B tests are ideal for an initial foray into conversion optimisation, as they can be easier to set up. If you are running just one alternate and the original, it can also mean that you get a quicker result.

However, with A/B testing it is difficult to isolate what factor may be influencing the change in conversion rate, especially if the two versions are radically different to each other.

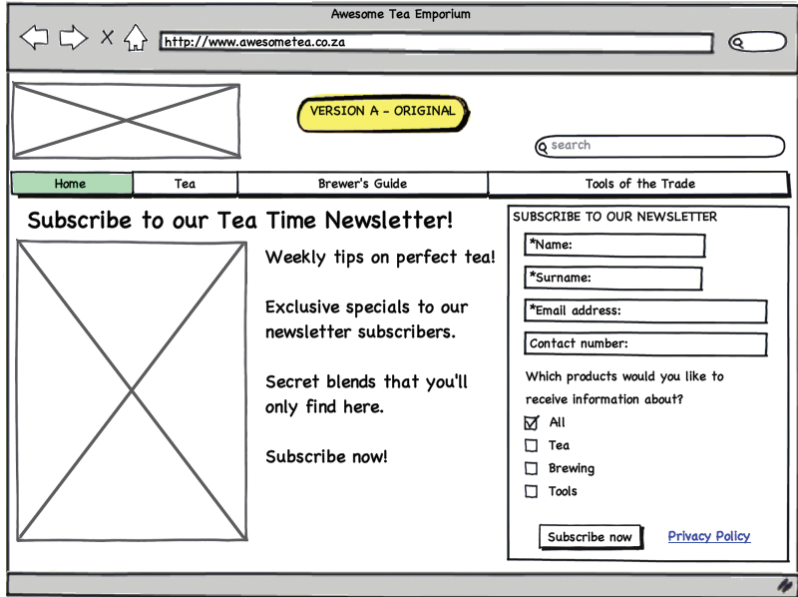


Figure 21.4 Balsamiq image showing A/B - Version A.

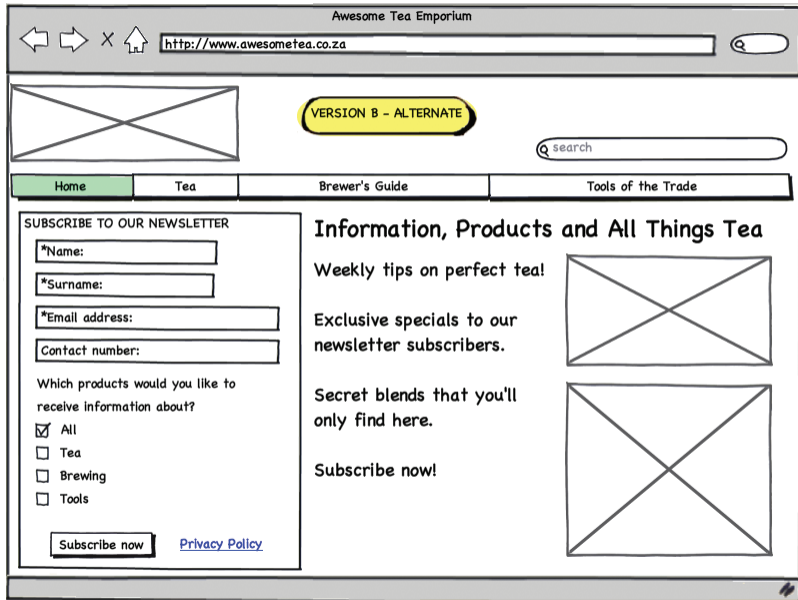


Figure 21.5 Balsamiq image showing A/B - Version B.

We can also run **multivariate tests** (sometimes referred to as MVTs). Here, a number of elements on a page are tested to determine which combination gives the best results. For example, we might test alternate headlines, alternate copy and alternate Call to Action buttons. Two versions of three elements means that we are testing eight combinations!

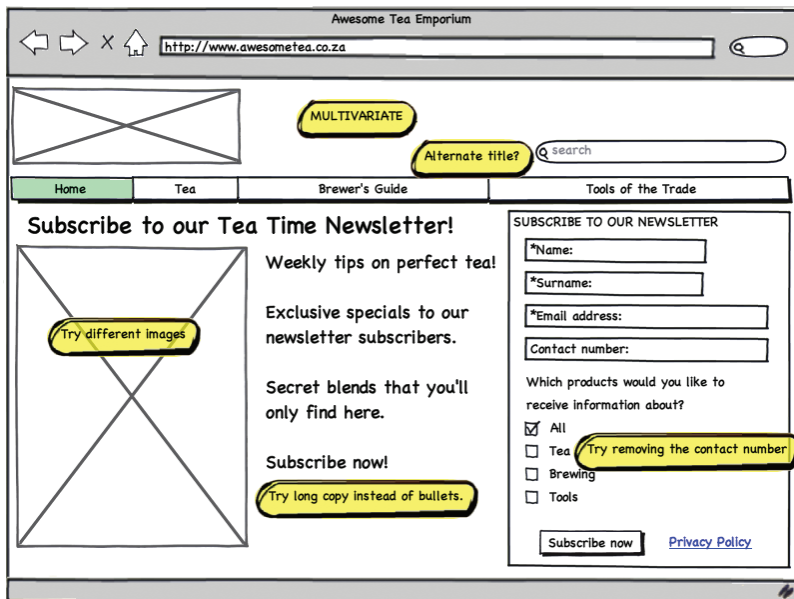


Figure 21.6 A multivariate test would test combinations of alternative elements.

Multivariate tests can be more complicated to set up, but allow you to test more elements at once. Multivariate tests are ideal when you have large traffic volumes.

If traffic volumes are not very high, it can take a very long time to reach a statistically significant result, especially if there are a lot of combinations being tested.

21.6 length of tests and sample size

There are several factors which determine the tests you can run. Relatively simple calculations help you to determine how long a test is likely to take, which is based on the number of participants as well as the improvement in conversion rate.

Number of participants

The number of participants in the test is determined by how many people actually see the page being tested, as well as what percentage of your potential customers you want to include in your test.

The number of people who see the page being tested might not be the same as the number of visitors to your website. You'll need to use your web analytics to determine the number of people viewing the page you want to test. Of course,

if you are running advertising campaigns to direct traffic to the page being tested, you can always spend a bit more money to increase the number of people coming to that page.

You also want to determine what percentage of people will be involved in the test. In a simple A/B test, if you include 100% of your visitors in the test, 50% will see version A and 50% will see version B. If you include only 50% of your visitors, 25% of your overall visitors will see version A, and 25% will see version B. Including 100% of your visitors will give you results quicker. However, you might be concerned that your alternate version could perform less well, and you don't want to compromise your performance too much.

Change in conversion rate

While this is not something you will know upfront, the percentage change in conversion rate also affects the length of a test. The greater the change, the more quickly a statistically significant decision can be made.

Number of variations

The more variations you have, the longer it will take to determine which combination performs the best.

These factors can then be used to calculate the suggested length of time for a test to run. There are several online calculators that do this for you, including one from Google Website Optimizer

www.google.com/analytics/siteopt/siteopt/help/calculator.html

Estimate Test Duration	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
# Test combinations	2	2	2	3
# Page views per day	200	200	300	350
% Visitors in experiment	100	100	50	50
% Current conversion rate	30	30	30	30
% Expected improvement	20	40	20	30
Days Duration	4.01	1.04	5.35	4.22

Figure 21.7 Four sets of figures from the GWOC tool above showing how small changes affect your test.

It is often a better idea to test bigger changes or variations, rather than very small changes, unless you have a very large audience.

21.7 what can you test?

The short answer: everything! However, there are some good tactics to start testing.

Email marketing

The most obvious place to start testing your email marketing is with subject lines. A simple split test will help you to determine which version of a subject line improves open rate. Within an email, you can test your Call to Action copy to see how you can improve clickthrough rate. Email is also a good medium to test different kinds of offers to see how those influence sales. These can be combined with testing different types of content: long copy vs short copy, or images vs video.


You can also test delivery days and times for your email, either with a split test or by testing with your whole group at different times of the year.

Advertising: display and PPC

There are many different conversion points you might want to test with advertising. You can test to see how different adverts might improve clickthrough rate or you can test to see how different adverts affect the conversion rate of the traffic coming to your website.

Different Calls to Action in the adverts can be tested, as well as different headlines. When it comes to display advertising, completely different versions of banner adverts can be tested.

Most adservers, including MediaMind (www.mediaind.com) and Google's AdWords, have built-in testing. This means that often no additional code is required in order to run tests. In most cases, the adserver will also serve adverts based on the results of the test, so that the better performing advertisement is given preference over time.



[Spoil Your Pet Today](#)
Get a 10% Discount
on a new membership.
www.fancypets.com

[Your Pooch Is Worth It](#)
Get a 10% discount
on a new membership.
www.fancypets.com

Figure 21.8 Two PPC adverts with different headlines.

Social media

If you are broadcasting or distributing messages via social media, you should test your messages to see which perform better. Most times you will be testing

to see how you can increase engagement with your message, whether that's replying to messages or posts on Twitter or Facebook, retweeting messages shared on Twitter or clicking through on links shared.

Types of messages can be tested to see which increase interactions: direct questions or the sharing of links. Types of media can be tested: images vs video. Time of day or day of the week can also be tested, to see how these affect interactions.

It can be more difficult to test social media messages scientifically, as the environment is more difficult to control.

Landing pages

A landing page is the first page a visitor sees on a website. In some web analytics packages it is referred to as an entrance page. Any page of your website could be a landing page, especially if people are coming to your website via search engines. However, when you are running online campaigns that utilise tactics such as email campaigns or advertising campaigns, you are often sending visitors to a specific landing page.

Because you choose the page that visitors see first, you have an opportunity to craft a page which converts. There are many things you can test on landing pages:

- **Heading:** do different headings make your visitors behave differently?
- **Copy:** style, tone, layout and length of copy can all be tested, as well as things like the font size.
- **Call to Action:** do different Calls to Action increase actions?
- **Colour:** test different colour buttons.
- **Images:** different images can have an impact on conversions.
- **Offer:** don't forget, you can also test different types of offers on a landing page or word the same offer differently.

eCommerce

There are many things you can test on eCommerce websites, but the most obvious are to test your product pages and your checkout process. With eCommerce, you are usually testing to increase your conversion rate (more people buy from you) or to increase your basket size (people buy more from you). As your testing gets more sophisticated, you will hopefully be achieving both.

On product pages, you should be testing to see how you might encourage users to start the purchasing process. Some things to test include:

- **Images:** images of different sizes or enlarging options can increase conversion rate.

- **Call to action:** “add to cart” vs “buy now” for example can give different results.
- **Shipping information:** you should test to see whether displaying shipping costs affects starting the checkout process, as well as its effect on completing the purchase.
- **Credibility information:** does the inclusion of statements like “secure shopping” affect conversion rate?

Product pages are also a good place to test how you might increase basket size. You can test displaying complementary products, or similar products. If you spend time on Amazon.com, you’ll see them displaying items which customers bought together, suggesting you should do the same.

On Amazon.com items that were bought together are displayed for the website visitor, encouraging sales.

The screenshot shows the Amazon.com homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Amazon logo, a search bar, and links for 'Today's Deals', 'Gifts & Wish Lists', and 'Gift Cards'. Below this is a sidebar with 'Shop All Departments' and a list of categories like 'MP3s & Cloud Player', 'Amazon Cloud Drive', 'Kindle', etc. The main content area features a large advertisement for the Kindle e-reader, titled 'Kindle The #1 Bestseller on Amazon'. Below the ad, there's a section titled 'What Other Customers Are Looking At Right Now' which displays several product cards with images, titles, and prices. Below that is a 'Netbooks Bestsellers' section with more product cards.

Kindle
The #1 Bestseller on Amazon

Order now: **\$139** Wi-Fi | **\$189** Free 3G+Wi-Fi

What Other Customers Are Looking At Right Now

Kindle 3G, Free 3G + Wi-Fi, 3G Works... Amazon \$189.00	Kindle, Wi-Fi, Graphite, 6" Display... Amazon \$139.00	Lowepro SlingShot 100 All-Weather... \$82.00 Click for details	Born This Way (+Digital Booklet) + Lady Gaga MP3 Download \$0.99	Black & Decker CCC3000 18-Volt... \$189.99	Tommy Bahama Luggage Nassau Wheeled Bag \$98.00 - \$116.99
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Netbooks Bestsellers

Samsung Q430 14-inch HD LED Laptop \$899.99	HP Pavilion dv6-3140us 15.6-inch... \$624.00 \$599.99	Dell Inspiron iM501R-2272MFB 15.6... \$610.00 \$598.49	ASUS N82JQ-X1 14-inch Laptop (Dark Brown) \$1,009.00 \$807.81	HP Pavilion dv5-2130us 14.5-inch... \$774.00 \$634.99	Toshiba Satellite A665-30V5 15.6-inch... \$1,209.00 \$957.95
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See all bestsellers in Netbooks

Figure 21.9 Amazon.com displays items a visitor is likely to want to buy.

The checkout process is incredibly important to test. Often, an online purchase takes place over several screens, or steps. Instead of looking at the overall conversion rate, you should be looking at the conversion rate between each step. This is referred to as funnel analysis.

If possible, you should test a single page checkout vs the multipage approach. Test credibility and reassurance statements in the checkout process. Font size in the checkout process can also have an effect on conversions.

The above should give you an idea of where you can start with your conversion optimisation, but it is by no means an exhaustive list.

21.8 tools of the trade

Online, conversion optimisation relies on being able to record which version of a test a web visitor sees, and whether or not that visitor converted. A returning visitor should also see the same version that they saw the first time. There are many software solutions that help you to do this.

Google Website Optimizer is a free A/B and multivariate testing solution. JavaScript tags are placed on test pages and the conversion page and the software reports regularly on the results.

www.google.com/websiteoptimizer

Google also offers a tool that helps to calculate how long a test is likely to be.

www.google.com/analytics/siteopt/siteopt/help/calculator.html

There are many split test calculators online that help you to determine the significance of split tests if you are running them yourself.

<http://www.usereffect.com/split-test-calculator>

ClickTale is a web analytics tool that helps you to visualise how particular pages are performing with heatmaps of mouse movements and clicks on a page. It also offers form analysis, showing how particular form fields might be affecting completion rate.

www.clicktale.com

21.9 summary

Conversion optimisation is the process of testing to increase the conversions from a website or digital campaign. A conversion can refer to any action that a web visitor takes.

Tests are either A/B tests, or multivariate tests.

The basic approach to conversion optimisation is:

1. Gather data
2. Analyse data
3. Fix anything that's broken
4. Design tests
5. Run tests
6. Report and repeat

21.10 case study: London Vision Clinic

London Vision Clinic is a leading laser eye surgery clinic in the UK which offers several specialist operations. The main goal for their website is the generation of leads which can be followed up and ultimately converted into sales. While a significant amount of leads were being generated through their website, it was thought that this very important process should be investigated. Conversion optimisation was applied to the contact process in order to ensure that the contact mechanisms were being used to their optimum efficacy.

The goal-driven website design incorporates a mini contact form on every page as well as contextual links directing users to the contact page. Users who choose to contact the clinic are given the choice of being called by London Vision Clinic, receiving a brochure or the UK Guide to Laser Eye Surgery. This is very important as it allows the clinic to establish the next step in the process - the all important sale.

Quirk, London Vision Clinic's agency, realised that the contact form on each page was a key contact point to investigate. Quirk decided to use Google Website Optimizer (www.google.com/websiteoptimizer) to track user behaviour when encountering the form. A new home page with a tweaked Call to Action was then created. After both pages were taken live, the amount of traffic brought to the website was split equally between the two versions. This allowed for the testing of people's reactions to the different designs.

Original: <http://www.londonvisionclinic.com/> (This link now goes to an updated site.)

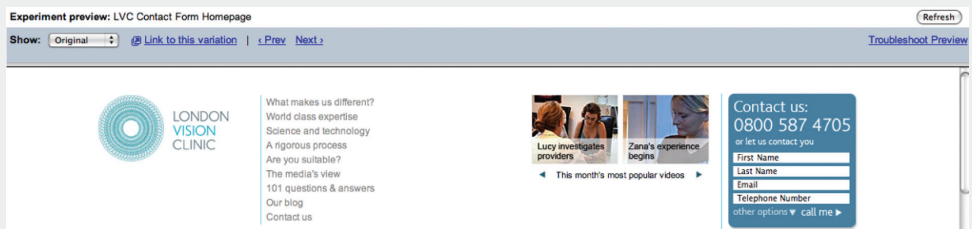


Figure 21.10 The original contact form.

Variation 1 - button: <http://www.londonvisionclinic.com/home2> (Link no longer active)

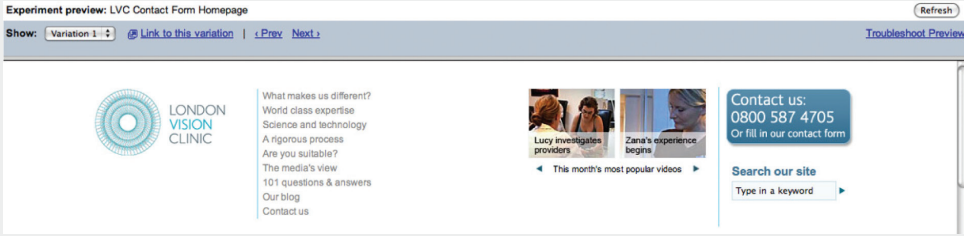


Figure 21.11 The first variation on the contact form, far simpler.

As you can see, the second web page used a less complicated contact form. Instead of slowing users down by forcing them to submit details, the box gave users the choice of either calling the clinic directly or submitting details for one of the four options mentioned above. In addition, the actual process was streamlined, with only the “other options” choice removed.

In the month the test was run, Quirk was able to track that the number of leads generated by the form had in fact increased.

Combination	Observed Visitors	Observed Conversions	Conversion Rate	Conversion Range	Chance to Beat Original	Observed Improvement
Original	2036	57	2.800%	0.511%	0.000%	0.000%
Variation	2033	61	3.000%	0.528%	64.779%	7.175%

Figure 21.12 Adjusting the contact form resulted in a significant change in results.

Users clearly reacted favourably to the changed form, with an increased conversation of three percent. The change to the contact form – although minor – had an actual impact on whether or not people contacted the London Vision Clinic. This translates directly into more leads and ultimately more sales. This shows that something as small as a contact form can have an impact on the bottom line, meaning that an investment in conversion optimisation is an essential step in the digital marketing process.

case study questions

1. What is the relationship between the goals of the website and the conversion optimisation process?
2. What is a conversion?
3. Why did the change on the contact form make a difference to the conversion rate?

chapter questions

1. Describe a situation where an A/B test would be more suited as a data gathering method than a multivariate test.
2. What does the acronym CRO stand for and what process does it describe?
3. What can you test on an eCommerce product page? List three examples.

further reading

- FutureNow's GrokDotCom - www.grokdotcom.com
 - Commentary, case studies and conversion optimisation best practice
- Ann Holland's Which Test Won - www.whichtestwon.com
 - Case studies where you can guess the result, and compare your prowess to other visitors.
- *Always Be Testing: The Complete Guide to Google Website Optimizer* by Bryan Eisenberg, John Quarto-vonTivadar, and Lisa T. Davis

The Internet is a dynamic and exciting environment. It has changed the way we communicate and express ourselves, and it has forced companies and individuals to change the way they do business.

With this textbook, you have a solid guide to the tools and tactics of digital marketing. Each of the tactics on their own can do wonders to boost your business, but the best digital marketing strategy comes from an integrated, customer-centric approach.

As marketing geeks the world over will tell you, markets are conversations. The Internet has given customers a platform for responding to the marketing and advertising messages they are being exposed to, revealing opportunities for companies and brands to engage in two-way conversations instead of one way broadcasts. It has revealed the declining effectiveness of one size fits all mass communication, but instead allows for cost-effective mass customisation.

Due to the nature of the Internet, digital marketing campaigns are highly trackable and measurable, and can be targeted and customised. Response and awareness can be measured and monitored through online reputation management tools. Companies and customers can use the same social media platforms to express themselves and communicate with each other.

Keeping up to date

With the web being so dynamic, we can only ever hope to offer you the foundations for your digital marketing in a printed textbook. Every chapter includes some of the best resources we know of from industry experts who will help you to keep up to date with this exciting medium.

This book is also supported by an online resource centre at www.quirk.biz/emarketingtextbook. That's the first place to look for any updates, as well as more case studies showcasing the techniques outlined in this book.

For an updated list of resources and links, visit www.delicious.com/quirkemarketingtextbook. We've included all the references and resources from the book, and plenty more to keep you informed during your digital marketing career.

The QuirkStars regularly blog at www.gottaquirk.com. We have regular tips from our digital marketing strategists, as well as round-ups of some of the best Internet campaigns. And you should definitely sign up for the Quirk newsletter for a fortnightly fix of all the best that there is in the world of digital marketing: www.quirk.biz. You can also follow the QuirkStars on Twitter. Follow Quirk at www.twitter.com/quirkagency, or follow the QuirkStars by following the list at twitter.com/quirkagency/quirkstars.

If you have feedback for us, some unanswered questions, or if you think there's anything we've missed, let us know! You can email us directly on textbook@quirk.biz.

The Next Step

We hope you're even more enthusiastic about the web than when you began – and now is the time to turn that enthusiasm into action!

Why not start a blog? It's free to start a blog using www.wordpress.com or www.blogger.com. Open yourself a Twitter account at www.twitter.com. As mentioned earlier, you can follow the QuirkStars to get a taste of what can be found on Twitter, and they'll often retweet or mention other people who are good to follow.

Use what you've learned to help out a small business or non-profit organisation. Maybe set up their first Facebook page, or a simple website using www.withtank.com or www.yola.com. Perhaps see how you can use mobile to help them to start a community using www.motribe.com. Use Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) to get an overview of who is talking about your brand (or even about you!).

Go through the chapters and start your own reading list based on the "Further Reading" sections. Get regular updates by having new posts emailed to you, or set up your first RSS reader at www.google.com/reader.

Take your learning a step further, and get a certification that proves how much you know! Google offers certifications for both AdWords (www.google.com/adwords/professionals/individual.html) and Google Analytics (www.conversionuniversity.com). Or, keep an eye on www.quirk.biz/courses for a variety of in-depth courses and certifications on many of the topics in this book.

further reading

- www.cluetrain.com – The website for *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, where you can read the entire book for free. This seminal work shows how "markets are conversations."
- www.delicious.com/quirkemarketingtextbook – All the links and resources from this book in one easy online spot.
- www.gottaquirk.com – The blog from the minds of Quirk.
- www.twitter.com/quirkagency – Quirk's Twitter account.

2D Barcode See “QR Code”.

301 Redirect A 301 redirect, also called URL redirection or URL forwarding, is a web development technique which redirects a user to one web page whenever an incorrect or outdated URL is used.

3G The third generation of mobile network technology with improved speeds than that of EDGE. 3G allows for mobile streaming and improved Internet connection speeds.

Above The Fold The content that can be seen on a screen without having to scroll down. In email marketing, this refers to the portion of an email that can be viewed in the preview pane.

Accessibility The general term used to describe the degree to which a system is usable by as many people as possible without modification. In one context it refers specifically to people with disabilities and their use of assistive devices such as screen-reading web browsers.

Action A specified task performed by a user. Actions include purchasing a product, signing up for a newsletter or filling in a form.

Active Server Pages (ASP) It’s the same abbreviation of Application Service Provider but definitely not the same thing. Active Server Pages are Microsoft’s server-side technology for dynamically-generated web pages. ASP of this variety is marketed as an add-on to Internet Information Services.

Active verb A word that conveys action or behaviour, and in a Call to Action, tells a prospect what to do.

adCenter Microsoft’s advertising Platform. Serves PPC adverts to Bing and Yahoo!

AdSense See “Google AdSense”.

ADSL Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line. ADSL is a high speed method of accessing the Internet, a lot faster than ISDN.

Advertiser See “Merchant”.

Advertorial An advertorial is an advertisement, presented in a printed publication and structured like an objective opinion editorial - usually designed to look like a legitimate and independent news story. The word “advertorial” is a portmanteau of “advertisement” and “editorial”.

Affiliate Affiliates market a merchant’s products and earn revenue for successful referrals to the merchant’s website. Also called a publisher.

Affiliate Forum	An online community of affiliate enthusiasts where members can read or post topics on any topics linked to affiliate marketing.
Affiliate Marketing	An agreement between two sites in which one site - the affiliate, agrees to feature content or an advertisement designed to drive traffic to another site. In return the affiliate site receives a percentage of sales generated by traffic it sends towards this site (the merchant).
AJAX	Abbreviation of Asynchronous JavaScript and XML, AJAX is a web development technique for creating interactive web applications. AJAX increases usability and speed by ensuring the web page doesn't have to reload each time a change is made by the user.
Alexa Rank	A number indicating how popular a website is compared to other sites, based on information returned by the Alexa Toolbar and Quirk SearchStatus. The number is the index of a given site in long ordered list of popularity, the most popular site at index 1, the second most at index 2 and so on.
Algorithm	An algorithm is a mathematical, computational or statistical method pre-determined to take a number of variables into account and output a single, quantifiable number that is a function of all of the variables. A good example of a commonly used algorithm is the one used by Google to determine which pages should rank more highly on the SERPs.
Alternative Reality Game (ARG)	A game that takes place in both the real world and in a fantasy world, and usually involves an online component.
Alt Tag	See "Alt Text".
Alt Text	This refers to the "alt" attribute for the IMG HTML tag. It is used in HTML to attribute a text field to an image on a web page, normally with a descriptive function, telling a user what an image is about and displaying the text in instances where the image is unable to load. Also called Alt Tag.
Analytics	The simplest definition of analytics is "the science of analysis". A simple and practical definition, of the term, would be how an entity (i.e., business) arrives at a realistic or optimal decision based on existing data.
Android	Android is a software platform and operating system for mobile devices, based on the Linux operating system, and developed by Google and later the Open Handset Alliance.
Animated GIF	A GIF (type of image file) which supports animations and allows a separate palette of 256 colors for each frame.

Annotations A comment or instruction (usually added as text) to a YouTube video. A YouTube annotation may contain links directing users to other pages within YouTube, or if a brand is willing to pay, to outside websites.

API An application programming interface (API) is a particular set of rules and specifications that software programs can abide by when communicating with each other. It serves as an interface between different software programs and facilitates their communication, similar to the way a user interface facilitates communication between humans and computers. APIs are often used by third-party developers to create applications for social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook.

App An app, short for application, is a software program designed to complete a specific set of functions on the web or a specific model and make of phone.

Application Service Provider (ASP) Essentially a business that provides computer-based services to customers over a network.

Ask.com This search engine formally known as Ask Jeeves was founded by Garrett Gruener and David Warthen. Ask Jeeves allowed users to ask questions in everyday language and became an extremely popular engine. As Google, MSN and Yahoo! began indexing pages faster, Ask Jeeves suffered. Though its user base is still significantly smaller than those of the big three, Ask.com is still a popular engine.

Astroturfing Covert and manipulative use of word of mouth in order to further a commercial or personal agenda.

Attribution Attribution is the recognition for and reference to the creator or author of information or media.

Augmented Reality A variation of virtual reality which takes computer graphics and superimposes them into “reality”—the physical space around the person operating an AR device. These graphics can be 3D images or simply information tags about a location.

Autoresponder A nifty program designed to send an automated response to incoming messages.

Avatar An avatar is the graphical depiction of the user or the user’s alter ego or character. It may take either a two-dimensional form as an icon in Internet forums and online communities, or a three-dimensional form, as in games or virtual worlds.

Back Button	This button, which is located at the top of a web browser, allows you to go back to a page you were on previously in a session.
Back End	The support components of a computer system. It typically refers to the database management system (DBMS), which is the storehouse for the data. Normal users will often never encounter the back end.
Backlink	All the links on other pages that will take the user to a specific web page. Each link to that specific page is known as an inbound/backlink. The number of backlinks influences PageRank so the more relevant backlinks the better.
Bandwidth	The amount of data a connection is capable of moving, generally measured in bits/megabits/gigabits per second.
Banner	An online advertisement in the form of a graphic image that appears on a web page.
Banner Blindness	Banner blindness occurs, in web usability, when visitors to a website ignore banner-like information.
Banner Exchange	A symbiotic advertising initiative whereby businesses involved promote each other's services and websites on an exchange rather than paid basis. Also known as link exchange.
Basic phone	A basic phone has a numerical keypad, severely limited data storage, little to no Internet capabilities and a low quality display.
Benefit	The positive outcome for a user that a feature provides.
Black Hat	A term coined by the SEO industry to describe techniques that cross the line in terms of ethical behaviour when striving for better search engine results. These practises include hidden text, keyword stuffing and repetition of content. The direct results may be astounding but the long term results are damaging as black hat SEO techniques are a no-go with the search engines: employ these tactics at your own peril. Your site may be blacklisted.
Blacklists	Blacklists are lists of IP addresses belonging to organizations that have been identified as spammers. The ISPs use these lists to filter out spam and block messages from these IP addresses for reaching their final destination.
Blog	A blog is a type of website that allows users (bloggers) to post entries on different topics and can allow readers to comment on these posts.

Blog Comment	A facility whereby users can remark or provide feedback on a particular post. Due to the fact that some individuals or companies have abused this system by automatically spamming blog comments with links to their websites, many comment systems are now moderated or by invitation only.
Blogsphere	The world of blogs, bloggers and blog posts.
Blogroll	A collection of links to other blogs. It is usually found on the home page of most blogs.
Boilerplate	Standard wording about an organisation that usually appears at the foot of a press release.
Bookmarking	Saving the web address of a web page or website so that it may be easily referred to. Bookmarks can be managed with a browser, or with an online tool.
Bookmarks	The list of all websites you have book marked are your bookmarks.
Bot	Software applications that run automated tasks over the Internet. Normally, bots perform tasks that are simple and structurally repetitive. They perform these tasks at a much higher rate than would be possible for a human alone.
Bounce rate	Single page view visits divided by entry pages.
Bounces	The number of emails that were unable to reach their final destination due to a hard or soft bounce.
Bounces (single page view visits)	Visits that consist of one page, even if that page was viewed a number of times.
Brand	A brand is the collective perception of your organisation by its stakeholders – these can be employees, service partners or customers. It is an intangible but incredibly valuable asset for your organisation.
Brand Awareness	A measure of how quickly a brand is called to mind.
BrandsEye	BrandsEye is an online reputation management (ORM) service which allows for real-time monitoring of a brand on the web. BrandsEye combines human subjectivity with sophisticated technology, allowing the quantifying and benchmarking of online reputation.
Breadcrumb Links	Links, usually on the top of the page, that indicate where a page is in the hierarchy of the website.
Brief	A document giving essential information concerning the problem that needs solving.

Broad Match	An option that has to do with keywords set-up. By using the broad match option, your ad will display results for every possible search phrase that uses your keyword phrase. The broad match does not take into account the topic of the words or the existence of additional words in the search phrase.
Browser	An application used to access the Internet. Popular browsers include Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Internet Explorer and Apple Safari.
Business to Business (B2B)	When businesses sell products/services to other businesses and not to consumers.
Business to Consumers (B2C)	When businesses sell products/services to consumers.
Buzz	Online excitement and word of mouth is referred to as buzz.
Cache	A cache is a temporary copy of a collection of data. If accessing the original data is proving to be resource heavy and time-consuming, then users can access the cache thereby not having to reload the original data.
Call To Action	A CTA is a phrase written to encourage the reader to take action. (sign up for a service, book car hire today etc.).
Canonical	The canonical version is the definitive version. In SEO, it refers to a definitive URL.
CAN-SPAM	Stands for "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003." and is a U.S law that controls commercial email.
CAPTCHA	CAPTCHA stands for "Completely Automated Turing Test To Tell Computers and Humans Apart" and it does pretty much what it says. It is a program that asks a user to complete a simple test to prove the user is human and not a computer. The most common test is by typing in the content of a distorted image of numbers and text that a computer is unable to read.
Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)	This is a language used to describe how an HTML document should be formatted. Cascading Style Sheets provide the ability to separate the layout and styles of a web page from the data or information.
Chiclet	A small icon adjacent to a blog post, article or web page to indicate the availability of an RSS feed, or to allow users to share the information via social media. Named after the gum of the same name because of its unique, pillow-shaped icon.
CHTML	Stands for Compact Hypertext Markup Language, and is a version of HTML for mobile devices and other limited hardware.

Click Fraud	The act of generating invalid clicks on an advert. Deliberate invalid clicks may be generated by competitors to waste the media budget of an advertiser or by site owners hosting the advert in order to increase profits from the clicks.
Click Path	The clicks taken by a visitor to a website in one visit.
Click Tracking	Using scripts to track clicks into and out from a website. Can also be used to shield a link from being picked up as a back link to another site.
Clicks and Mortar	A business that has both online trading capabilities and offline physical stores.
Clickthrough	The number of times a link was clicked by a user.
Clickthrough Rate	The total clicks on a link divided by the number of times that link was shown, expressed as a percentage.
Click to call	A function which allows the user to click on a link to make a telephone call.
Client-side	Transactions that take place in the browser before information is sent to the server.
Cloaking	Cloaking is when the content presented to the search engine spider is different from that presented to the users' browser. This is a black hat technique.
Cloud Computing	Cloud Computing is Internet ("cloud") based development and use of computer technology ("computing"). It is a style of computing in which dynamically scalable and often virtualised resources are provided as a service over the Internet.
Cluetrain Manifesto	A set of 95 theses organised as a Call to Action for businesses operating within a newly connected market place.
Code of Conduct	A set of rules that guide behaviour in a given situation. A Code of Conduct will often outline behaviour that is deemed unacceptable.
Collaborative CRM	Umbrella term for all the interactive options for serving customers. It is people-based customer support that includes: collaborative browsing, web-based text and voice chat, desktop sharing, application sharing, file transfer and phone support. See "CRM".
Commission	The bounty paid by a merchant to an affiliate when the affiliate makes a successful referral.
Common Page Elements	Items which appear on every page of a website.

Common Short Codes (CSC)	Users send messages to shortened numbers, usually to get something in return, like an entry to a competition for example.
Consumer Generated Media (CGM)	Information that is published online by individuals. This refers to videos, photos, blogs, audio and more. It is also referred to as social media.
Consumer to Business (C2B)	When consumers sell products/services to businesses.
Consumer to Consumer (C2C)	When a consumer sells products or services to other consumers.
Content Management System (CMS)	A script or program for maintaining websites, particularly the content.
Contextual Advertising	Advertising on content websites rather than on search sites where adverts are placed based on the content of the website.
Conversion	A visitor completing a target action.
Conversion Funnel	A defined path that visitors should take to reach the final objective.
Conversion Optimisation	Two phase process which is made up of analysing the collaborative effect of your digital marketing efforts and optimising their effect in turning visitors into customers.
Conversion Rate	The percentage of visitors to a website that perform a desired action, such as making a purchase or filling out a form. For example, if 30 visitors out of 100 subscribe to a newsletter, the conversion rate is expressed as 30%.
Cookie	A small text file that is stored on an end-user's computer that allow websites to identify the user, store unique variables, and allow the website owner to construct a profile of that user.
Copyright	Copyright secures the right of the author of creative work to be identified as such, and gives the author rights regarding republishing, copying and derivative works for a period of time.
Cost Per Action (CPA)	Refers to the cost of acquiring a new customer. The advertiser only pays when a desired action is achieved (sometimes called cost per acquisition).
Cost Per Click (CPC)	Refers to when an advertiser only pays when their ad is clicked upon, giving them a visitor to their site - typically from a search engine in Pay Per Click search marketing.

Cost Per Lead (CPL) Commission structure where the affiliate earns a fixed fee for a lead sent to a merchant.

Cost per Mil (1000) (CPM) Amount paid for every 1000 views of an advertisement.

Count Raw figures captured for analysis, these are the most basic web analytics metric.

Creative Commons Licence Creative Commons (CC) is a non-profit organisation devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to legally build upon and to share.

Cross Marketing Marketing other products or services to an existing customer. Cross marketing enhances the ability for generating further sales. Also known as Cross Selling.

Cross Selling See "Cross Marketing".

Crowdsourcing Harnessing the skills, talents and ideas of a broader community, usually through social media.

Customer A person who buys or uses goods or services. A person with whom a business must deal.

Customer Life Cycle The progressive steps a customer goes through when purchasing, using or considering a product or service.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) A strategy for managing a company's interactions with clients and potential clients. It often makes use of technology to automate the sales, marketing, customer service and technical processes of an organisation.

Cybersquatting Cybersquatting occurs when a domain name that contains the name of a well-known brand/subject/trademark i.e. digital marketing.com is purchased with no intent to be developed but rather sold off to the highest bidder.

Data Mining The process of analysing large amounts of data for patterns. This process can be used to predict buying habits, credit card purchases and cross sale capabilities.

Database In email marketing, the database is the list of prospects to whom emails are sent. It also contains additional information pertinent to the prospects.

Dead Link A link to a page that no longer exists: spiders check these types of links and eventually eliminate them from search engine results. Also see Link Rot.

Deep Linking	This is when a user arrives at a site deep within its structure or where search engines index a mirrored copy of content normally unavailable to search engine spiders.
Del.icio.us	Del.icio.us (pronounced “delicious”) is a social bookmarking site that allows for the sharing and storing of links.
Dell Hell	The term used by Jeff Jarvis when his Dell computer malfunctioned, and he had a hard time getting appropriate customer service. After blogging about it he started an online trend known as “Dell Hell” that did great damage to Dell’s reputation.
Derivative	Work that is derived from another work.
Digg	Digg is a community-based news article popularity website. It combines blogging, syndication and social bookmarking with a form of democratic editorial control. News stories and websites are submitted by users, and using a user-based ranking system, are promoted to the front page.
Digital marketing	The process of marketing a brand using digital channels.
Directory	Directory websites provide an ordered listing of registered websites in different categories. They are similar to an e-version of Yellow Pages. Yahoo! and Excite are the best known examples of directories.
Display Network	Content websites that serve PPC adverts from the same provider, such as AdWords.
Document Object Model (DOM)	A web standards approach to representing HTML and XML documents as objects.
DomainKeys	An email validation system designed to authenticate the DNS domain of an email sender and the message integrity.
Domain Name	The name of a server that distinguishes it from other systems on the World Wide Web: our domain name is quirk.biz.
Domain Name System (DNS)	DNS resolves a domain name into an IP address.
Dotcom	An enterprise that only conducts business online. These enterprises do not have physical stores; the products/services they offer are sold online.
Double Opt-in	This is when users have to verify their email address after an email is sent to them upon subscription. It ensures email addresses are valid and that users are truly wanting to sign up.

Download	Transferring files from one computer to another. When you are online you are downloading files from a website server to your PC.
Downstream	In information technology, downstream refers to the transfer speed (usually that of an Internet connection) by which data can be sent from the server to the user. The process by which downstream is used is known as downloading.
Dynamic Keyword Insertion	In paid search advertising, this allows keywords used in searches to be inserted into advert copy.
Dynamic Parameter	The elements of a URL that are dynamically generated.
Dynamic Site	Content such as text, image and form fields on a web page that change according to user interactivity.
Earnings Per Click (EPC)	Taken from the total amount earned divided by the number of clicks.
EDGE	A faster version of GSM wireless service. It enables data to be delivered at rates up to 384 Kbps on a broadband.
Electronic Customer Relationship Management (eCRM)	The practice of customer relationship management utilising the Internet.
Electronic Payment	Payment and receipt of payment via the Internet.
Email	Also known as electronic mail, Email is essentially mail that is electronically transferred from PC to PC. Email allows you to send messages to anyone, anywhere in the world instantly.
Email Newsletter	Like a traditional print newsletter but delivered to your inbox rather than to your post box.
Encryption	Mathematical algorithms are used to encrypt data in order to protect it from unauthorized use.
Entry page	The first page of a visit.
Event	A recorded action that has a specific time assigned to it by the browser or the server. Also, a step a visitor takes in the conversion process.

Exact Match	A keyword option by which you set your ad to be displayed only when the search phrase you define and that of the Internet user match exactly. When you use this option you put your keyword phrases in brackets.
Exit page	The last page of a visit.
Exponential Growth	If growth more than doubles with each iteration, it is exponential.
External referrer	A URL that is outside of the website.
Facebook	Facebook is a social networking website launched in 2004 and made public in 2006. The free-access website allows users to join one or more networks, such as a school, place of employment, or geographic region to easily connect and interact with other people. Although incredibly popular several organisations and groups have voiced privacy concerns.
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions. It's always useful to have a section like this on your site to give users quick answers to questions they're likely to have.
Favicon	This small, nifty icon identifies a bookmarked site.
Feature	A prominent aspect of a product which is beneficial to users.
Feature Phone	Similar to a basic phone but with several improved features which could include a camera, radio, limited storage capacity and low-end online capabilities.
Feed	See "RSS" and "RSS Reader".
Feed Reader	An RSS aggregator that lets you view all your RSS feeds in one place.
Flash	A technology used to show video and animation on a website; can be bandwidth heavy and unfriendly to search engine spiders.
Flickr	Flickr is a photo sharing website, online community platform and web services suite.
Flog	A fake blog is known as a flog. For example when a company will start a blog but pretend it is run by independent consumers.
Focus Group	A form of qualitative research where a group of people are asked questions in an interactive group setting. From a marketing perspective, it is an important tool for acquiring feedback regarding new products and various topics.
Folksonomy	Categorisation or taxonomy based on social media tags.

Forum	An Internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site.
Forward Button	This button allows you to go forward again once you have used the back button.
Frames	An HTML technique used to combine two or more HTML documents within a single web browser screen. Frames can often cause accessibility and usability issues and their use is largely discouraged by good designers.
Frequency	This is the interval, at which marketing efforts such as email newsletters are repeated, (weekly/monthly etc.).
Frequency Cap	Frequency caps are present to limit the number of times we are exposed to the same online advert.
Front end	The starting point, head or input side in a system. It may, for example, refer to the graphical interface on a user's workstation where all data are entered or to a communications system.
FTP	FTP or File Transfer Protocol is a standardised method of moving files across the Internet.
Gateway Page	See "landing page"
Geographical Targeting	Also Geotargeting. Used to allow you to see where your visitors come from and to give them specific information that is relevant to them.
GIF	Abbreviation of Graphics Interchange Format, a GIF is an 8-bit-per-pixel bitmap image format using a palette of up to 256 distinct colours. GIF's allow images to be reduced without degrading their quality.
Goal	The defined action that visitors should perform on a website or the purpose of the website.
Google	The world's best known search engine, Google, offers access to billions of web pages in over 30 languages to searchers all over the world. Google began life as the research project of two graduate students, Sergey Brin and Larry Page.
Google AdSense	This program allows sites to display adverts from Google AdWords and earn revenue from the hits that generate traffic.
Google AdWords	Google's PPC program, which allows advertisers to display their adverts on relevant search results and across Google's content network.
Google Alerts	Google Alerts is a service offered by the search engine company Google which notifies its users by email (or as a feed) about the latest web and news pages of their choice.

Google Maps	Google Maps is a free web mapping service application and technology provided by Google that powers many map-based services.
Googling	This is what you're doing when you enter a search query in Google.
GPRS	General Packet Radio Service. Delivers wireless packet data services to GSM customers.
GPS	Global positioning System. A global navigation satellite system that allows users to determine their exact location.
Grey Hat	Grey Hat SEO is what occurs when white hats try and push the limits of what they can get away with. With the rapid evolution of search engines they don't often get away with it for very long. See Black Hat.
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications. Most widely used of the three digital wireless telephone technologies. Uses a variation of time division multiple access.
GZIP Compression	Software that compresses a website in order to speed up download times.
Handset	A portable or mobile phone.
Hard Bounce	The failed delivery of email communication due to an permanent reason like a non-existent address.
Hardware	The body of your PC, hardware comprises all the physical components of a computer (monitors, keyboards, printers, drives etc).
Heading Tags	Heading tags (H1, H2, H3 etc) are standard HTML elements used to define headings and subheadings on a web page. The number indicates the importance, so H1 tags are viewed by the spiders as being more important than the H3 tags. Using targeting key phrases in your H tags is essential for effective SEO.
Heat map	A data visualisation tool that shows levels of activity on a web page in different colours, reds and yellows showing the most activity and blues and violets the least.
Hidden Text	A black hat technique where the keywords are invisible to the naked eye as they are the same colour as the page's background. Search engines are not fooled by this unethical technique and sites will be penalised for employing it.
Hit	A hit, though often mistaken for a measure of popularity, is a request from a user's browser to view a particular page or image.

Home Page	The first page of any website. The home page gives users a glimpse into what your site is about – very much like the index in a book, or a magazine. Also on the index page.
House List	An email database that a company has built itself without purchasing or renting names.
HTML	The abbreviation for HyperText Markup Language, read by web browsers. Certain HTML “tags” are used to structure the information and features within a web page. As an example, HTML emails usually contain graphics and can be interactive.
Hyperlink	A link in a document (electronic) that allows you, once you click on it, to follow the link to the relevant web page.
iFrame	The iframe tag contains an inline frame that contains another document. Basically this means that you can draw information from another website to display – such as with Facebook tabs.
IIS	Internet Information Services, a web server from Microsoft.
Impression Fraud	The act of deliberately generating impressions of an advert without the intention of clicking on the advert. The result is a reduction in clickthrough rate which can affect Quality Score in PPC advertising.
Impressions	The number of times a web page or ad is viewed.
Inbound Link	See Backlink.
Index	The searchable catalogue of documents and pages created by a search engine. Web spiders index websites with the search engines by scanning or crawling them.
Information Architecture	The layout and structure of a website, which should be according to information hierarchy and categories.
Instant Messaging (IM)	Is a technology that allows its users to communicate in real-time. Essentially your IM system alerts you when a contact on your list is online; you can then initiate a chat session.
InStream Videos	A video advertisement that plays before the start of the actual selected video. Typically 15 or 30 seconds in length. Also known as pre-roll.
Intellectual Property	IP is a term referring to a number of distinct types of creations of the mind for which a set of exclusive rights are recognised.
Internal referrer	A URL that is part of the same website.

Internal Site Search	A search function specific to a website.
Internet	A worldwide system of interconnected computer networks; the Internet connects millions of individuals from every corner of the globe.
Internet Explorer	IE – Microsoft’s web browser.
Internet Press Release	An element of WebPR, an Internet press release is exactly the same as a traditional press release but is released online rather than in print and can be optimised to form part of an SEO strategy.
Intranet	An intranet is a private computer network that uses Internet protocols and network connectivity to securely share part of an organisation’s information or operations with its employees.
IP Address	The Internet Protocol (IP) address is an exclusive number which is used to represent every single computer in a network.
ISP	Internet Service Provider – this is the company that is providing you access to the Internet, for example MWEB and AOL.
Java	A programming language which allows multifaceted and graphical customer applications to be written and then accessed from a web browser.
JavaScript	A popular scripting language that is used on websites to perform client side actions without requiring full page refreshes. Examples include web analytics for page tagging and page animation.
Junkmail	See “Spam”.
KEI Analysis	KEI or Keyword Effectiveness Indicator Analysis is designed to measure and quantify the quality and worth of search term.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A metric that shows whether a website is achieving its objectives.
Key Phrase	Word or words being optimised for a website. Also used to refer to words that are used by users of search engines.
Keyword	A word or words used by a searcher on a search engine. In SEO, keywords are the words that a website is optimised to rank for, and in PPC, keywords are bid on by advertisers. In online reputation management, a keyword is a term that is used when searching the Internet for mentions.

Keyword Density	This relates to the number of times a keyword/key phrases appear on a web page. This divided by the total number of words that appear on a page gives you a percentage. The higher the better - but not too high - you don't want to be penalised for keyword stuffing.
Keyword Frequency	The number of times a keyword or key phrase appears on a website.
Keyword Phrase	Two or more words that are combined to form a search term/query - often referred to as keywords. It is usually better to optimise for a phrase rather than a single word as more searches will search for a phrase rather than a word as they want more specific and relevant content.
Keyword Rankings	This term refers to where the keywords/phrases targeted by SEO rank amongst the search engines - if your targeted terms do not appear on the first 3 pages, start worrying.
Keyword Research	The process of researching what searchers are searching for, copy optimisation revolves around the selection of the best keywords/key phrases. There are a multitude of keyword research tools out there, which will help you discover the best possible keywords for which to optimise websites.
Keyword Stuffing	Repeating keywords/phrases over and over ad nauseum. This is done in the hopes of improving the page's ranking. Search engines penalise sites heavily for keyword stuffing.
Lame-Ass Syndrome (LAS)	This unfortunate yet common syndrome results in sites that will not function without the WWW in the URL; it is caused by System Administrators presenting signs of severe DNS laziness.
Landing Page	The page a user reaches when clicking on a paid or organic search engine listing. The pages that have the most success are those that match up as closely as possible with the users search query.
Link	A link is a URL embedded on a web page, if you click on the link you will be taken to that page.
Link Bait	A technique for providing content that attracts links from other web pages.
Link Checker	These tools are used to check your site for broken hyperlinks. Very useful.
LinkedIn	LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site founded in December 2002 and launched in May 2003 mainly used for professional networking.
Link Exchange	See "Banner Exchange".

Link Popularity	A measure of the quantity and quality of other web pages that link to a website.
Link Rot	When you click on a link and receive an error message or a notification that the website has been moved. This highly frustrating phenomenon known as link rot is detrimental to SEO as spiders cannot keep up with the changes. This could be solved by a redirect link being inserted.
Linux	An open source operating system based on UNIX. Linux is used to run web servers and desktops.
Load Time	The length of time it takes for a page to open completely in the browser window.
Local Area Network (LAN)	A network of workstations sharing a server within a relatively small geographic area, like in an office.
Log Analyser	Software that provides information about a site's visitors, activity statistics, accessed files, clickthrough paths and other analytical data based on the users behaviour.
Log Files	Text files created on the server each time a click takes place, capturing all activity on the website.
Market Share	Market share, in strategic management and marketing, is the percentage or proportion of the total available market or market segment that is being serviced by a company.
Marketing Mix	The four elements businesses need to consider for the success of their marketing efforts: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. The focus that is placed on each one is entirely dependent on the goals of the marketing strategy.
Mashup	When content from two or more sources is combined.
Mass Customisation	Tailoring content for many individuals.
Media Kit	Much like a press kit, a media kit contains essential information about a business, including contacts, logos, websites and links, as well as basic background information.
Mentions	In online reputation management, mentions refer to the instances when a selected brand, company or staff members are talked about online, usually by clients or consumers.
Merchant	This is the owner of the product that is being marketed or promoted. Also referred to as "Advertiser".

MetaData Information that can be entered about a web page and the elements on it that provide context and relevancy information to search engines; these were once an important ranking factor.

Meta Description Tag A short paragraph describing the page content. This summary is usually shown on the SERPs if it contains the term searched for. The spiders use the meta tag description to determine the topic of the page and the use of targeted key phrases is important here.

Meta Keyword Tag A list of the words and phrases that are important on a web page, the use of targeted key phrases is important here - but remember no keyword stuffing.

Meta-Search Engines A search tool that will allow a user to conduct a search across two or more search engines and directories. Examples of meta-search engines include Clusty and Dogpile.

Meta Tags Meta tags are there to tell the spiders exactly what the web pages are about. It's important that your Meta tags are optimised for the targeted key phrases. Meta tags are made up of meta titles, descriptions and keywords.

Microblog Microblogging is another type of blogging which consists of blogs with very short posts, such as Twitter.

Microsite A microsite, also known as a minisite or weblet, is an Internet web design term referring to an individual web page or cluster of pages which are meant to function as an auxiliary supplement to a primary website. Often used in campaigns.

Mirror Sites Duplicates of a site usually found on a different server. These sites are used to trick search engines and are usually considered a Black Hat tactic which the search engines will most often penalize by removing both the mirror and original sites from the index.

Mobile Network The facilities and technology that make public mobile telecommunication services possible.

Moblog A blend of the words mobile and weblog. A moblog, consists of content posted to the Internet from a mobile or portable device, such as a cellular phone or PDA. Moblogs generally involve technology which allows publishing from a mobile device.

MSN MSN Search was developed by Microsoft and was comprised of a search engine, index, and web crawler. On 12 September 2006 MSN Search evolved into MSN Live Search which offers users the ability to search for specific types of information using search tabs that include web, news, images, music, desktop, local, and Microsoft Encarta.

Multimedia Message Service (MMS)	An extension on SMS, allows picture, sound or low quality videos to be sent on a wireless network.
Multivariate Test	A test used when testing many variables to determine statistically significant influences on outcomes.
MySpace	MySpace is a social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos for teenagers and adults internationally.
Natural Search	These are the listings generally found on the left hand side in search engines, and are not influenced by direct financial payments. Listings are results based on factors such as keyword relevancy within a web page: SEO is used to boost success. Also see Organic Search.
Navigation	How a web user moves through a website, and the elements that assist the user.
Netiquette	Like etiquette but on the net, netiquette are the social rules that govern online interactions. An example of a net no-no would be IMing someone in caps (this means you're SHOUTING).
Netizen	A word derived from net and citizen. Unlike a newbie, a netizen is an experienced web user. Someone who has spent a significant (if not disproportionate) time on the web.
Network	A group of two or more computer systems linked together in a LAN or a WAN.
New visitor	A unique visitor who visits the website for the first time ever in the period of time being analysed.
Newbie	Aka n00b. Fresh blood – someone who is new to the wonderful online world and is often unaware of netiquette. You have to start somewhere, right?
Newsgroup	An online discussion group.
Newsletter	A newsletter is a regularly distributed publication usually about one main topic that is of interest to its subscribers.
Nofollow Link	Nofollow is an attribute of a hyperlink, indicating that the link is not necessarily endorsed by the website and ignored by search engine spiders.
Online Press Release	Press release distributed over the Internet. It is aimed at a broader segment of reader including social media, consumers and journalists.

Online Press Room A part of a website aimed at providing journalists with pertinent corporate information, such as PR contacts, images and press releases.

Online Reputation An online reputation is formed by the aggregation of sentiment from mentions of an entity online.

Open Rate This is also referred to as the read rate. This is the number of emails that are opened in an email marketing campaign as a proportion of the total emails sent.

Open Source Unlike proprietary software, open source software makes the source code available so that other developers can build applications for the software, or even improve on the software.

OPML A file containing a list of RSS URLs. Often used for sharing feeds amongst users.

Opt-in This enables users to give permission for emails (or any other direct marketing) to be sent to them.

Opt-out Also known as unsubscribe - The act of removing oneself from a list or lists so that specified information is no longer received via email.

Organic Search These are the listings generally found on the left hand side in search engines, and are not influenced by direct financial payments. Listings are results based on factors such as keyword relevancy within a web page: SEO is used to boost success. Also see Natural Search.

Original Referrer The URL that sent a new visitor to the website.

ORM Online reputation management - the understanding and influencing the perception of an entity online. This entails ensuring that you know what is being said about you, and that you are leading the conversation.

Outbound links These links will, once clicked on, take users to another site.

Packet Internet Groper (Ping) A utility that verifies a link or a connection to the Internet.

Page Unit of content (so downloads and Flash files can be defined as a page).

Page Exit Ratio Number of exits from a page divided by total number of page views of that page.

Page Tags JavaScript files embedded on a web page and executed by the browser.

Page Views The number of times a page was successfully requested.

Page Views Per Visit	The number of page views in a reporting period divided by the number of visits in that same period.
PageRank	PageRank gives a ranking or score to every web page on the Internet based on the number and quality of the page's backlinks. This score is a number out of 10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Anything above 5 means your site is doing well!
Paid Search	Placing ads for products or services on search engines (listings appear at the top of the page and on the right hand side) and on content sites across the Internet. These ads are typically small snippets of text linked to merchandise pages. See "pay per click".
Pass on	To share content with another person.
Pass On Rate	The number of times a piece of information or content is forwarded to others.
Pay Per Click (PPC)	Advertising on search engines and content pages, where advertisers only pay for each click on their targeted advert.
Pay Per Lead (PPL)	Similar to pay per click, PPL is an advertising payment model in which payment is made on leads not just clicks.
PC	Personal Computer.
Permalink	A unique URL which points to the permanent location of a single blog post and its associated comments and TrackBacks.
Persona	A character used to define a type of user to visit a website or read certain copy.
Phishing	A criminal activity where "Phishers" attempt to fraudulently acquire sensitive information, such as passwords and credit card details. Often this is done by masquerading as a party the victim is likely to trust (another person or reputable business) via some form of electronic communication like email, IM or even telephone.
Photobucket	Photobucket is an image and video hosting, slideshow creation and photo sharing website.
Plug-in	An extension that adds on to the capabilities of a major software package.
Podcasting	Publishing audio programs via the Internet, allowing users to subscribe to a feed of new files. Podcasting enables independent producers to create self-published, syndicated "radio shows". Listeners may subscribe to feeds using "podcatching" software (a type of aggregator), which periodically checks for and downloads new content automatically.

Popup	Unrequested window that opens on top of the currently viewed window.
Press Release	Also called a news release, this is an electronic or paper document issued to the media with the intention of gaining news coverage. It follows established layout guidelines.
Primary Research	The collection of data to present a new set of findings from original research.
Privacy Policy	A Privacy Policy outlines the data that is collected by a website owner, what it is used for, and how it is secured.
Profit	Money made from a product/service after costs have been accounted for.
Promoted Videos	YouTube and Google AdWords 'Promoted Videos' is an advertising solution that allows users to promote their video content within the YouTube website.
Publisher	See "Affiliate". In context of marketing the term publisher can be exchanged for affiliate.
Purity Point	The 'cleanliness' of a mailing list based on previous mailings. A Purity Point of 0 is the best while 1 is the poorest. This decimal number is based on the number of bounces and their type, compared to the amount of emails sent.
QR Code	Also known as a 2D Barcode. These are scannable barcodes which can be read by certain mobile applications (by taking a photo of the barcode). They contain information such as a URL.
Qualitative Data	Data that can be observed but not measured. Deals with descriptions.
Quality Score	Quality Score is the basis for measuring the quality of keywords and determining minimum PPC bids. This score is calculated by measuring a keyword's clickthrough rate, ad text relevancy, the keyword's historical performance and the quality of the landing page.
Quantitative Data	Data which can be measured or defined. Deals with numbers.
Quirk	A Marketing Agency. Born Digital. Driven by creativity. Disciplined by results.
QWERTY	This refers to the most often used modern day keyboard layout. Regarding mobile phones, it refers to devices with a full keypad.
Ranking	In search, ranking is used to describe the relative position of a web page in the SERPs.

Ratio	An interpretation of data captured, a ratio can be between counts, ratios or a ratio and a count metric.
Reach	The number of unique users who have viewed an online advertisement.
Really Simple Syndication (RSS)	RSS allows you to receive/ syndicate this information without requiring you to constantly open new pages in your browser. Also known as a feedreader.
Reciprocal Link	This is when a site agrees to link to another site providing that the other site links back to it in return.
Reddit	Reddit (also reddit) is a social news website on which users can post links to content on the web. Other users may then vote the posted link up or down, causing them to appear more or less prominently on the Reddit home page.
Referrer	The referrer is the URL of the web page that a user was at before reaching yours. The server's logs capture referral URLs and store them in their log files. Furthermore, if a user used a search engine to find your website, the key phrases they used to find your site will be embedded in the referring URL. Intelligent log analysers can then take this data to track how many visitors originate from each key phrase.
Repeat Visitor	A unique visitor with two or more visits within the time period being analysed.
Reputation Score	This is the single, quantifiable number, generated by BrandsEye; online reputation management software. It is derived from an algorithm that takes into account all the relevant mentions of a brand, and the significance that the user has attached to them. This significance is ascertained through the process of tagging each mention to rank across a number of weighted criteria that include sentiment and credibility amongst others. This score provides a benchmark against the brand's reputation as it fluctuates over time, and also allows comparison between a brand and its competitors.
Return on investment (ROI)	Is the ratio of cost to profit.
Return Visitor	A unique visitor who is not a new visitor.
Revenue	Yield of income from a particular source.
Revenue Share	Commission structure where the affiliate earns a percentage of a sale.

ROAS	This stands for Return on Advertising Spend and indicates the amount of revenue garnered from each referrer. It is calculated by dividing the total amount of revenue garnered by the total amount of revenue spent on the advertising campaign.
Robot.txt	A file written and stored in the root directory of a website that restricts the search engine spiders from indexing certain pages of the website.
Robots Exclusion Protocol	A protocol used to indicate to search engine robots which pages should not be indexed.
RSS Reader	This is how you read your RSS Feeds. These desktop news readers or aggregators display new content from the RSS feeds that you have signed up to. Also known as RSS Aggregator.
Salesforce Automation	A type of program that automates the business task of sales associated with effective implementation, productivity and forecasts.
Sample Size	The number of units or respondents in a sample of the population.
Sandbox	A sandbox is a testing (or virtual) environment that isolates untested code changes and outright experimentation from the production environment or repository, in the context of software development including web development and revision control, and in addition in web-based editing environments including wikis.
Screencast	A screencast is a digital recording of computer screen output, also known as a video screen capture, often containing audio narration.
Scripting Language	A high level language used to control what the user sees on a site or to manipulate the data stored on a server.
Search	Searching is the process of finding information on the Internet using search engines.
Search Engine	A tool for searching the Internet. Users of search engines enter keywords relevant to their search, and the search engine returns results from its databases.
Search Engine Copywriting	The practice of writing content specifically designed for chosen key phrases. This enhances spiderability and results in higher rankings on search engines.
Search Engine Listing	The listing of pages in the results pages (SERPs) of a search engine in response to a search query.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	Refers to marketing that is related to search. It comprises SEO and PPC.
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	The practice that aims to improve a website's ranking for specific keywords in the search engines.
Search Engine Results Page (SERP)	The page that shows the results for a search on a search engine.
Search Engine Submission	Supplying a URL to the search engines to make them aware that the website and its pages actually exist and alerting them of updated content in the hopes of faster and more regular indexing.
Search Query	See "Search Term".
Search referrer	The URL that has been generated by a search function.
Search Term	Search terms are the words entered by the searcher. Search engines will then look for these words in their index and return matching results. Also known as Search Query.
SearchStatus	An awesome toolbar extension for Firefox and Mozilla that allows you to see how any and every website in the world is performing. Designed by Quirkstar Craig Raw, SearchStatus provides extensive search-related information about any site.
Secondary Research	Collection of existing research data.
Security Protocols	An abstract or concrete protocol that performs a security-related function and applies cryptographic methods.
Seed	The process of initiating a viral campaign through strategic online placement.
Seed Audience	The initial audience from which viral growth starts.
Segmentation	This is used to filter visitors into distinct groups based on characteristics so as to analyse visits.
Sender Alias	The name that is chosen to appear in the sender or from field of an email.
Sender ID	A process used by major ISPs to confirm that emails do originate from the domain from which it claims to have been sent.

Sender Policy Framework (SPF)	An extension of SMTP that stops email spammers from forging the "From" fields in an email.
Server	A computer that delivers information and software to other computers linked by a network.
Server-side	Transactions that take place on the server.
Session	A session is a lasting connection between the user and a website.
Short Message Service (SMS)	Electronic messages sent on a wireless network.
Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP)	A protocol for sending messages from one server to another.
Single Page Visits	Visits that consist of one page.
Site Architecture	The design and planning of websites involving the technical, aesthetic and functional elements that combine to create a website.
Site Refinement	Improving a websites design and functionality. Also see "Web Standards".
Sitemap	On a website, a page that links to every other page in the website, and displays these links organised according to the information hierarchy.
Skyscraper	Term for the format of an online ad that is tall and narrow. Skyscraper ads are typically run along the right or left margin of a web page.
Smart Phone	A phone with enhanced capabilities than that of a feature phone. A Smart Phone can be considered a mobile computer as it offers many of the same features.
Social Bookmarking	A web based service to share Internet bookmarks. Del.icio.us and Digg are examples of social bookmarking services.
Social Currency	A measure of a person's power and influence within a defined social group.
Social media	Media that is created, published and shared by individuals on the Internet, such as blogs, images, video and more.
Social network	In the online sense, this refers to a type of website model where individual members become part of a broader virtual community. i.e. Social Network.
Soft bounce	The failed delivery of an email due to a deviating reason like an overloaded mail box or a server failure.

Solaris	The operating system used on Sun Systems known for its robustness and scalability.
Spam	Email sent to someone who has not requested to receive it - EVIL!
Spider	An automated program that scans or crawls web pages to gather information for search engines.
Splash Page	This is a page, usually animated and containing some kind of variation of the phrase 'click here to enter this site'. These pages are considered detrimental to SEO and usability.
Split Testing	Creating hypotheses and testing them by randomly sending visitors to either of two options, in a statistically equal manner, and measuring which has the best conversion rate.
Sponsored Advert	Also known as pay per click (PPC).
Sponsored Links	The paid search results on a SERP.
Stakeholder	A person or organisation with an interest (a "stake") in how a resource is managed.
Strategy	A set of ideas that outline how a product line or brand will achieve its objectives. This guides decisions on how to create, distribute, promote and price the product or service.
SWOT Analysis	A framework used to evaluate a company's market position via its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors the company can affect. Opportunities and Threats are external factors the company can't control but must plan for.
Subject Line	The title of the email communication. As it is the first element of the communication that will be seen, it needs to attract attention and entice the user to open the email.
Syndicate	Making content available for distribution among selected clients.
Tag	In social media, tags indicate or label what content is about.
Tag Cloud	A tag cloud (or weighted list in visual design) is a visual depiction of user-generated tags used typically to describe the content of websites. Tags are usually single words and are typically listed alphabetically, and the importance of a tag is shown with font size or color. Thus both finding a tag by alphabet and by popularity is possible. The tags are usually hyperlinks that lead to a collection of items that are associated with a tag.

Taxonomy	Classification and division into ordered categories, usually hierarchical. In social media, taxonomy can refer to the categorization of content on the Internet.
Terms of Use	The Terms of Use outline the services of a website and the rights and responsibilities of both the website owner as well as the website user.
Text Emails	Text emails or plain text emails do not contain graphics or any kind of markup.
Third Party	Someone other than the principal members involved in the transaction. Online, it often refers to a website or domain different to the domain being used.
Third Party Cookie	Some websites store information in a small text file on your computer called a cookie. A third party cookie either originates from, or is sent to, a website different from the one you are currently visiting. These third-party cookies can either be persistent, meaning they remain on the system after your session, or temporary, meaning they are removed from your system.
Title Tags	The (preferably optimised) title text you select will appear in the top bar of a user's browser when they view the web page. Title tags should be a brief and accurate description of the page's content.
Touch Point	Every instance the consumer comes into contact with a brand.
TrackBack	A mechanism used in a blog that shows a list of entries in other blogs that refer to a post on the first blog.
Tracking	Measuring the effectiveness of a campaign by collecting and evaluating statistics.
Tracking Codes	A piece of code that tracks a user's interaction and movement through a website.
Traditional Media	Newspapers, magazines, television and publishing houses are the realm of traditional media.
Traffic	This refers to the visitors that visit a website.
Twitter	Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send 140 character "tweets") to the Twitter website, via short message service (e.g. on a cell phone), instant messaging, or a third-party application such as Twittrific or Facebook.
Unique Forwarders	This refers to the number of individuals who forwarded a specific email on.

Unique selling point (USP)	(Or proposition) - what makes your offering different to your competitors'.
Unique Visitors	The number of individuals visiting the website one or more times within a prescribed period of time. Each individual is only counted once.
UNIX	The most common operating system for servers on the Internet.
Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)	Works on all existing GSM phones. It provides session-based communication, enabling a variety of applications.
URL	Uniform (or Universal) Resource Locator - the unique address of a web page on the Internet. For example, http://www.gottaquirk.com .
URL Rewriting	Presenting search-friendly URLs without question marks, and rewriting them on the server in their standard format suitable for use in querying dynamic content.
Usability	Usability is a measure of how easy it is for a user to complete a desired task. Sites with excellent usability fare far better than those that are difficult to use.
User Generated Content	User-generated content (UGC), also known as consumer-generated media (CGM) or user-created content (UCC), refers to various kinds of media content, publicly available, that are produced by end-users.
Vendor Relationship Management (VRM)	. The emerging school of thought that incorporates the tools, technology and services that make it easy for customers to manage relationships with vendors.
Video Search Engine Optimisation (VSEO)	Is optimising videos for search engines, similar to how one would optimise a website to rank higher on a SERP.
Video Syndication	The manner in which you attain optimum distribution and search coverage for your videos. This can include multiple facets of optimised distribution.
Views	This is the number of times a video has been seen. Remember, multiple views can come from one user.
Viral Video	This is a video that becomes immensely popular, leading to its spread through word-of-mouth on the Internet via email, social networks and other hosting websites.

Visit Duration	The length of time in a session.
Visit or Session	An interaction by an individual with a website consisting of one or more page views within a specified period of time.
Visit Referrer	The URL that originated a particular visit.
Visitor	Any person visiting a website that is not a search engine spider or a script.
Vlog	A video based log, also called a video log.
Web2.0	The network as a platform for content and functionality. This includes delivering and allowing multiple users access to dynamic web applications and content; online collaboration, generation and distribution of data and a richer interactive user-experience through website applications that enhance value and ease-of-use. Web2.0 is often considered to include RIAs (Rich Internet Applications) built in AJAX, Flash, Java applets or ActiveX.
Web Analytics	A software tool that collects data on website users based on metrics to measure its performance.
Web Browser	This is what allows you to browse the World Wide Web. Examples of browsers include Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Apple Safari and Mozilla Firefox (Quirk's number 1 browser).
Web Design	The layout and structure of a web page. Web design is not solely about making the page look pretty, it's also about functionality and usability.
Web Server	A remote third-party computer whose job it is to deal with requests coming from web browsers.
Web Standards	Best practices for building websites. The web standards are issued by the W3C.
WebPR	Public relations on the web. Online press releases and article syndication promote brands as well as drive traffic to sites.
White Hat	A term coined by the SEO industry to describe ethical SEO tactics.
White List	A list of accepted email addresses that an ISP, a subscriber or other email service provider allows to deliver messages regardless of spam filter settings.
Wide-Area Network (WAN)	A network of computers that are relatively far apart and are connected via telephone lines or radio waves.

Widget	A window or a text box for user interaction. An area on a page hosted by a third party, generally used for a small application or syndicated content.
Wiki	A wiki is an online collaborative tool that allows numerous users to access and edit web page content freely and creatively. It supports links to websites, images and text and can be used for a host of functions, including project planning and document building.
Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)	A set of standards that allows web access on mobile devices.
Word of Mouse	Word of mouth is sometimes referred to as word of mouse online. Online gossip, spread through blogs, newsgroup postings, IMing and email.
Word of Mouth	Information that is passed between people, as opposed to messages from a company to people.
WordPress	WordPress is a blog publishing system written in PHP and backed by a MySQL database.
WordTracker	WordTracker is an online tool that helps website owners and search engine marketers identify keywords and phrases that are relevant to their or their client's business and most likely to be used as queries by search engine visitors.
World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)	An organisation which oversees the Web Standards project. www.w3c.org .
WWW	The World Wide Web is the complete collection of files written in various mark-up languages on the Internet.
WYSIWYG	WYSIWYG is an acronym for What You See Is What You Get, used in computing to describe a system in which content displayed during editing appears very similar to the final output, which might be a printed document, web page, slide presentation or even the lighting for a theatrical event.
XHTML	Extensive Hypertext Markup Language. Is a markup language that has the same depth of expression as HTML, but also conforms to XML syntax.
XML	eXtensible Markup Language - a standard used for creating structured documents. XML promises more efficient and organized delivery of data over the Internet. XHTML is the XML version of HTML.

Yahoo! One of the most popular search engines on the net Yahoo! began its life as the bookmark lists of two graduate students, David Filo and Jerry Yang. Their bookmark list just never seemed to stop growing, and today Yahoo! serves billions of page views worldwide.

YouTube YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips.

Zone-file In computer networking, a zone file is a database element of the domain name system (DNS) used by BIND and other DNS server software. A zone file typically contains information that defines mappings between domain names and IP addresses and can also contain reverse mappings which can resolve IP addresses into domain names.

2D Barcode, 441, 530, 552

301 Redirect, 102, 110, 530

3G, 9, 10, 141, 143, 159, 162, 163, 440, 444, 461, 530

A

Accessibility, 85, 86, 88-90, 416, 530, 542

Active Server Pages, 530

AdSense, 273, 321, 530, 542

ADSL, 9, 389, 530

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