

connect

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by MAIL PRINT



The Disillusionment of Social Media

Just where is the deluge of social media taking us, and can it remain relevant?

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Déjà Vu

Back in 1999, the dotcom craze was everywhere. Its rise was fast and furious. People left their solid jobs for a chance at stock options and the allure of becoming millionaires. Venture capitalists threw money at anything and everything that had a dotcom at the end of it. A few people ended up filthy rich – and they did it filthy quick. Even the general public enjoyed the ride.

But, as they say, “What goes up must come down.”

The meteoric rise of the e-commerce era was, in some part, a result of a promise that defied the laws of business. We heard that e-commerce would reduce all other channels, and, in some cases, completely eliminate them. Businesses no longer would need buildings or the people who occupied them. The answer, the experts said, was e-commerce.

And it was going to happen overnight.

But a funny thing happened a few years into the dotcom revolution. People realized that real businesses actually needed real people in them. They realized that e-commerce was a wonderful tool that wasn't going away. They realized that this new tool would expand their reaches, broaden their horizons and complement all other channels. And they realized that their relationships needed to be real.

Today, if you approach a venture capital firm with an idea rooted in e-commerce, you will be asked for more information. Venture capitalists, more than most, learned that the tool is not a business. Sure, many of them made millions of dollars off the short-term, speculative nature of the newly connected era. But many of them also saw that, if you don't have a true connection

“The meteoric rise of the e-commerce era was, in some part, a result of a promise that defied the laws of business.”

to your market, you couldn't build a sustainable business model.

In this month's issue of *Connect*, you'll find a couple of fascinating articles that remind us of those crazy dotcom days. Our cover article, “The Disillusionment of Social Media,” helps paint a picture of social media that seems eerily reminiscent to those boom years a decade ago. But while social networks are a part of what we all use today, the vehicle is not what business is built upon. It is the community we serve that matters most.

In turn, our second feature, “The Power of the Niche,” shows that true success is rooted in the specificity of a market niche. In other words, if you aren't standing for someone, you aren't standing.

And, as always, we stand for you. Enjoy this issue.

Warmest regards,

Gina M. Danner

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Gina M. Danner

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6 Perks of Marketing Portals

If you're like a duck – paddling frantically under water, it might be time to explore a marketing portal. This is especially true if your business is in multiple locations, is finding it difficult to keep up with its marketing efforts, and is using different vendors for each marketing channel.

Here are six perks portals provide in addition to allowing you not to paddle so hard this year.

1. Multiple Channels

A marketing portal can be designed so any marketing person at any of your locations can design, target and execute a dynamic campaign by direct mail, text, e-mail, and more – with just a few clicks and by using just one vendor.

2. Brand Consistency

Ferrellgas, a propane distributor with more than 900 locations, struggled with brand consistency prior to its portal because of various designs being created for many different locations often taking 10-business days to execute. With the help of Mail Print, Ferrellgas built a marketing portal that ensures brand consistency and reduces turnaround from 10-days to 24 hours.

3. Quick Turnaround

Using different vendors for each channel can cause major campaign delays. Corporate approved portals ensure the campaign goes out right and in a tight turnaround as mentioned above.

4. Customization

Making your marketing materials appear like you are speaking 1-to-1 increases your response. A marketing portal that can be customized to handle all of your corporate level marketing as well as satellite locations or in the case of Reece and Nichols, the largest real estate company in the Kansas City metro, the individual real estate agent needs as well.

Mail Print configures your user accounts to match the unique structure of your organization whether you are centralized, regional, or location/franchise-specific.

5. Targeted Lists

Finding the right audience will vary from location to location. Custom branded marketing portals like Mail Print creates provide you the option to hone in on the best geography and demographics for maximum response.

6. Saving Money

By training your key personnel at various locations to work smart through a marketing portal, you can save money in reprints and time in bottlenecks. Reece and Nichols saved nearly \$100,000 in expense and resources from its partnership with Mail Print, which is not unusual for any company's first year use of Mail Print's marketing portals. Ferrellgas, a national leader in the propane industry, is saving more than \$80,000 per year. The use of the marketing portal is also improving the company's usage and effectiveness of direct marketing by their 900 field locations.

The transition to using Mail Print's marketing management solution is **saving Ferrellgas**, a national leader in the propane industry, **more than \$80,000 per year**. The use of the marketing portal is also improving the company's usage and effectiveness of direct marketing by their **900 field locations**.



AMBITious Results

On Thursday, March 29th Mail Print and their clients were once again recognized for great results in direct marketing by the Direct Marketing Association of Kansas City. Organizations are recognized for creating campaigns and programs that drive measurable results in categories that include: Business or Consumer Integrated marketing, Not-for-Profit Direct Mail, Business or Consumer Direct Mail at various cost levels, Business or Consumer Space Advertising, Fundraising, Response Driven Web Marketing, Online Display, Email, Search Engine Marketing, Social Media, Mobile Marketing, Print Only, and Direct Response Television.

Thanks to our clients Harvesters Community Food Network and Assurant Employee Benefits for their ongoing partnership. Here is a snippet of the three entries and the awards presented.

Business Catalogs – Assurant Benefits Catalog *Gold Ambit & Consistent Achiever*

To solve the problem of generically explaining benefits vs. speaking directly to each employee with information that applied to them, Assurant Employee Benefits needed to move from static benefits materials into personalized insurance catalogs.

Mail Print developed a print automation system that produces flawless, personalized catalogs that customized to the individual's age, gender, geographical location, and salary — resulting in a simplified selection process for the employee that requires no need for calculations and interpretations to demine their rate.

In addition:

- The purchase rate of voluntary benefits rose 5% after implementation.
- Catalogs were produced in 24-hour timeframe vs. 7-10 days.
- As of the end of 2011, more than 180,000 catalogs for more than 1,100 client companies have been produced that are error-free.



Business Integrated Marketing – Connect Magazine *Silver Ambit*

To further establish Mail Print as a thought leader in the direct marketing industry and to demonstrate our belief in the ROI of direct mail, Mail Print launches Connect Magazine. A 16-page print magazine designed to present key information from Mail Print's existing materials that are easily digestible and helpful to top-level business people. The feature articles are based around direct marketing strategy and innovative marketing approaches. Content encourages clients and prospects to learn more by visiting the Mail Print blog or website.



In 2011, Mail Print attributed \$1.3 million in new business and new opportunities to Connect for a return on investment of \$41 for every \$1 spent on the magazine.

Fundraising – Harvester's Donor Receipt Program *Gold Ambit*

To solve the problem of generically explaining benefits vs. speaking directly to each employee with information that applied to them, Assurant Employee Benefits needed to move from static benefits materials into personalized insurance catalogs.

Mail Print developed a print automation system that produces flawless, personalized catalogs that customized to the individual's age, gender, geographical location, and salary — resulting in a simplified selection process for the employee that requires no need for calculations and interpretations to demine their rate. In addition:

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Congratulations to our team and our clients for allowing us the honor to serve their needs with award-winning solutions.

POWER of the NICHE



Building your brand means narrowing your focus and dominating your market space. Are you doing what it takes to succeed?

By Lorrie Bryan

In case you missed it, Apple crushed it. Posting record holiday quarter earnings that exceeded all expectations in all categories, it became the most valuable company on the planet in January as its stock shares surged. Although Apple clearly is dominating today's mainstream market, the Macintosh maker started by creating a counter-culture niche with a near evangelical devotion to all things Apple.

"They were one of the first computer companies that basically said, 'We are going to come up with a proposition and a value statement that is appealing to a rather small group of people, and we are going to focus on that group,'" says Koert Van Ittersum, associate professor of marketing at the Georgia Institute of Technology. "And that's what they did – they started with a small, distinct market."

In 1997, Apple launched a campaign that then-CEO Steve Jobs said reflected the Apple philosophy and reinforced its brand. Called "Think Different," it featured a concept called the "Crazy Ones." The commercials included black-and-white footage of iconic counterculture personalities like Bob Dylan and John Lennon. Also included was a series of print ads that focused more on brand image than specific products. The ads featured a portrait of a historic figure and a small Apple logo with the words Think Different in one corner. No reference was made to the company's products. The familiar faces on display included notable innovators such as Jim Henson, Miles Davis, An-

"Here's to the crazy ones. The rebels. The troublemakers. The ones who see things differently. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."

– Apple Inc., from the "Think Different" ad campaign

sel Adams, and Joan Baez, among others.

The Think Different marketing slogan not only shaped consumer perception, but also represented the company's internal activities. Although Apple dropped the slogan in 2002, the Think Different mindset remains firmly embedded in the company's culture.

Thinking differently is, in fact, at the root of competitive marketing strategies on a basic level. Laura Ries, a nationally acclaimed branding guru, author and president of Atlanta-based Ries & Ries, says that one key to successful niche marketing is being different – being the first in a category. "It would be folly to try to compete head-on with market leaders, unless, of course, you had an innovation that could be perceived as a new category," Ries says. "When you can create the niche market, consumers perceive you to be the market leader, and you can often maintain that leadership for decades."

Take Red Bull, which launched an energy drink brand in the U.S. market that rapidly became a market leader. Red Bull's success incited the launch of more than 1,000 energy drink products in the U.S. market, of which nearly 1,000 were unsuccessful.

"Most of those brands made the mistake of trying to emulate Red Bull by introducing their energy drinks in small, 8-ounce cans, when they should have launched something different," Ries says. "Monster was the first energy drink in a 16-ounce can, which became the No. 2 brand of energy drinks. Are 16-ounce cans a niche market? They certainly were when Monster was launched. But now Red Bull and many other brands also are available in 16-ounce cans."

“Today’s niche is often tomorrow’s mainstream product. Who can tell in advance?”

– Laura Ries, President, brand strategist firm Ries & Ries

DEFINING NICHE MARKETING

From Niche to Mainstream

Branding experts say it’s always better to narrow your focus and try to dominate a segment of a market, rather than compete with established brands in the overall market. “Today’s niche is often tomorrow’s mainstream product,” Ries says. “Who can tell in advance?”

Certainly not Hamdi Ulukaya, perhaps one of the most successful entrepreneurs to emerge during the most recent Great Recession. Ever heard of Chobani (pronounced cho-BAHN-nee)? Most had never even heard of Greek yogurt a few years ago. But that didn’t stop Ulukaya from buying a discounted Kraft Foods plant in New York and creating strained yogurt the way it traditionally had been made for centuries in his native country of Turkey – with all natural ingredients.

“Greek yogurt was a niche market that Ulukaya pioneered with Chobani, and now the Greek yogurt market is booming,” Ries says. “Chobani [now] has surpassed both Dannon and Yoplait to become the leading yogurt brand in the country. Who knew how big it would become when Chobani launched its brand?”

Keys to Successful Niche Marketing

According to Ries, Chobani’s success is rooted in three key strategies – being the first in its category, giving his product a new and different name, and launching his brand with integrated marketing.

1. Be the first in a new category – A decades-old Greek company, Fage, was the first to import strained yogurt to the United States. Still, most people in the States had never heard of Greek yogurt before Chobani started making it here in 2007, promoting it as a tasty, naturally healthy food. During its initial launch, Chobani didn’t want to market it

“Niche marketing is concentrating all marketing efforts on a small, but specific and well defined, segment of the population. Niches do not ‘exist,’ but are ‘created’ by identifying needs, wants and requirements that are being addressed poorly or not at all by other firms, and developing and delivering goods or services to satisfy them. As a strategy, niche marketing is aimed at being a big fish in a small pond, instead of being a small fish in a big pond. Also called micromarketing.”

– from [BusinessDictionary.com](#)

as a high-end health food. The strategy was to keep the costs down and ask grocers to place it near the other yogurt brands. Today, many grocers are giving Chobani a premium location in the yogurt section.

2. Give your product a new and different name – Chobani is the Greek word for “shepherd” and is symbolic for a gift that comes from the heart.

3. Launch your brand with integrated marketing – According to Nicki Briggs, Chobani’s communications director, Chobani was distributed as free samples as part of the promotional mix. “We felt like our product was so good that if people tried it they would like it, tell other people about it, and essentially create a ground swell,” Briggs recalls. “We also launched a mobile tour campaign

and traveled across the country in the ‘Chomobile’ handing out yogurt samples at festivals.”

In just four years, Chobani became the No. 1 yogurt company in the country with 2011 sales exceeding \$700 million.

The brand also enjoys a tremendous following of enthusiastic fans called Chobaniacs, whom have showed their love to the tune of more than 425,500 “Likes” on the social media site Facebook. In fact, the Facebook “Likes” are growing exponentially, with as many as 5,000 to 10,000 showing up daily. “We don’t see social media as a marketing tool; we see it as an outlet for authentic dialogue with our customers,” Briggs says. “We’re very responsive to what people are saying. This is where most of our ideas for new flavors come from.”

What Next?

Van Ittersum, who teaches graduate-level courses in brand management at

Georgia Tech, warns that brands with a growth curve like Chobani must be careful not to dilute their brands. "This is where a lot of great companies make a marketing mistake," he says. "Buoyed by success, they reach to grow their markets at the expense of diluting their brands. By leveraging what you've built, you run the risk of destroying it."

His advice: "Don't destroy your brand for short-term gains."

For example, PBR (Pabst Blue Ribbon), which, historically, branded itself as a "blue-collar" beer, today is enjoying more popularity among "hipsters" and "suits," because of its perceived under-dog status, populist appeal and affordability. Van Ittersum says it would be a mistake for PBR to overtly target its marketing efforts to these new demographic groups. "Never alienate your central target market," he says.

company recently launched Champions, a kid-friendly yogurt that stays true to its "Nothing but Good" slogan and mission.

Ries says the key is to ask yourself what your brand stands for in the minds of your customers. And, if you can't answer the question with one or two simple words, you have a branding problem. Successful examples include BMW, Volvo and Mercedes-Benz. Ask their customers what the brands stand for, and you will most likely hear the following: BMW – driving; Volvo – safety; and Mercedes-Benz – prestige.

So what does Chobani stand for? "Goodness," Biggs says. "Our product is good for you and it tastes good. We feel that, as long as we stay true to who we are – quality, good-tasting products that are priced fairly and honestly positioned, our growth is limitless."

Building a profitable \$700 million com-



“Those who admire the massive, rigid bone structures of dinosaurs should remember that jellyfish still enjoy their **very secure ecological niche.”**

– Beau Shell

A notable and amusing brand extension flop that Van Ittersum often shares with students is the Harley Davidson wine cooler. "Harley-Davidson took their brand extension to a whole other level when they introduced a line of wine coolers in the mid-1980s," he says. "A lot of refined wine drinkers own Harleys, but when we think of Harley Davidson, we think rugged bikers, leather jackets, tattoos, bandanas – not wine coolers."

Nothing but Good

For brands such as Chobani, many opportunities exist for growth on the horizon. For example, the

pany in four years is no small feat, and Greek yogurt can't be considered a small niche. Says Ries: "You don't create a small niche market. You create a niche market, but you don't know how large it will become. Every category started as a small niche market – soda, ketchup, facial tissue – and now Greek yogurt."

Now that's the power of niche marketing.



of Social Media

The news hit hard. Joe Paterno had died. The legendary 85-year-old Penn State coach, who had spent the last months of his life mired in a sea of controversy amid a child sex abuse scandal by a former coach, was pronounced dead at 3 p.m. EST, with family and friends by his bedside.

The problem was, Joe Paterno hadn't died. Onward State, an on-campus student news site, tweeted that Paterno had died of complications from lung cancer he had been diagnosed with last November, shortly after the university fired him.

The news of Paterno's death, while not unexpected, still carried an immense amount of sadness. That the erroneous announcement was made via a tweet, not fact-checked and picked up by the worldwide media was the mother of all reporting mistakes. Following several rebuttal tweets by Paterno's family, the inevitable happened – all of it. Paterno died the next day; news organizations that ran with the tweet apologized and vowed to undertake more diligent reporting; and the managing editor at the student website resigned in disgrace.

It is not the first time a well-known figure was tweeted dead too soon. Last January, several media outlets falsely reported that U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords had died after being shot during a public event in Arizona.

The age of social media – from its moment-of-impact reporting, to “liking” anything your friends post, and everything else in between – continues to create a culture in which being first to report the news or making yourself accessible 24/7 is the new cool. But truth be told, because social media allows for information to spread worldwide in a heartbeat, trends such as breaking news and increasing the presence of your brand can carry both risk and reward.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a study from the Software & Information Industry Association, 90 percent of marketers use social media, and three-quarters believe it has a positive impact on their business. But 55 percent said their marketing teams spend fewer than 10 hours a week on social media, with 35 percent spending between one and five hours a week.

The “he tweeted/she tweeted” world that now engulfs us is unlike anything we have ever seen. You want more proof? Check out the past couple of revolutions that social media helped start (Tunisia and Libya, anyone?). After the smoke clears, the pundits continue to debate just how much power social media has today and whether it has reached the tipping point.

Scott Klososky doesn't think so. He believes that online strategies will continue to revolutionize everything we do. Klososky, the

former CEO of three successful startup companies and a thought leader who specializes in examining how technology is changing the world, has worked as a speaker and consultant with companies such as Ebay, Cisco, Newell Rubbermaid, Lockheed Martin, Volvo, The Hartford and Marriott. Today, he is founder and chairman of Alkami Technology, which has developed a second-generation online banking platform that provides online account management solutions to the financial services industry.

Klososky says social media detractors see disillusionment falling into three areas: It's still new; some people don't find it easy to use; and too many expect it be a cure for everything they need. “When you hear people use the term ‘disillusionment’ in regard to social media, I think the main thing that gets them is that it's still new,” Klososky says.

“Changes, especially on the technology side, come in waves. Back in the early-'80s, when we first got into PCs, there was a lot of disillusionment in the IT world, because they didn't want people to have computing power. Next came the Internet. The disillusionment was that people would just use computers to watch porn and shop.”

Today, disillusionment conversations start with organizations run by 50-or-60-year-olds who don't get what social media is all about. “They don't want to learn something new,” Klososky says. “When you have 10-year-olds using an iPhone better than adults, well, then yes, you're going to

DID YOU KNOW?

Two-thirds of adults online are on Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites to stay in touch with current friends and family or to connect with past friends. Other findings show that 14 percent of users say that connecting around a shared hobby or interest is a major reason they use social media, while 9 percent say that making new friends is equally important.

get a bit disillusioned. There also are those who want whatever it is that's new to be the panacea; they want it to fix everything for them. If you have an unemployed person using social media to find a job, and he can't, he blames the tool. If your child is being bullied on a social media site, you say the tool is horrible."

Enter Good versus Evil – the ultimate debate. Klososky says that 50 percent believe social media today is used for good and 50 percent believe it is used for evil. "I always take the theory of disillusionment with a grain of salt when it comes to technology. It's a tool. People aren't using it as much as they could. It invades privacy. It causes you to ignore somebody a few inches away from you, while talking to somebody a hundred miles away. There are a lot of issues you can affix to this disillusionment theory. The pendulum will swing back and forth, but you can't say we are ever going back to the way things were. Social media is always going to be with us."

Putting a new name on the game

Scott Ginnett doesn't even call it social media anymore. Ginnett, the director of digital collaboration and social media for Ricoh Americas Corp., calls it "social technologies." For Ginnett, social media is a broad strategy that encompasses collaboration and outsourcing across an entire company's structure. Social technologies, he says, are apps, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

"Looking forward, that's my take on what social media is today," Ginnett says. "Any smart organization that assumes social media technologies and the strategies behind them are not impacting their business is like saying the Model T wasn't going to replace the horse. The rate at which the change is going is staggering. Any organizations that are waiting to embrace, or at least try to understand, what type of information they can get and consume through these channels is putting themselves at risk."

Ricoh's social media strategy is centered on two things: helping its customers build their businesses and giving them an outlet to communicate. If the information isn't relevant to helping grow their businesses, Ricoh will not provide it. All of Ricoh's platforms and strategies are designed to communicate with its customers.

"When somebody sends us a tweet or posts an item on Facebook, they are getting a response within 30 minutes – generally," Ginnett says. "We actively pursue communication. That's why people are coming to

our site. They want information – and they want it now. If they don't get a response within that first 90 minutes on a social media platform, they are not coming back."

Boon or burst?

Jenny Schmitt, founder of the communications firm, Cloudspark, frequently dissects approaches on social media strategies and business branding concepts. Ask if she sees any striking similarities between those once-powerful dotcom days of the late-1990s and today, she admits that predicting social media's future in that context is a risky proposition.

"You're seeing rapid infusions of cash through venture capitalists, as they try to get in early with the next big thing," Schmitt says. "The media and investor worlds still will get the companies wrong. We're still going to see failures, consolidations and leaders emerge. But we're also still going to have social media."

Schmitt says that technology and social media channels will change (think the migration from laptops, to tablets, and smartphones). "Few could have predicted the significant change the iPhone would have brought about five years ago," she says. "Certainly, there is technology being developed that will change how we interact with online worlds and meld those worlds into our real, off-line experiences."

That there are periods of disillusionment in anything is normal. Julie Bee, founder and president of BeeSmart Social Media, a social media marketing agency in Charlotte, N.C., says social media already is in a period of disillusionment.

"The magic of social media has worn off somewhat," Bee says. "I think the social networks that make it through this period will be the ones who please the entities that pay them – businesses, non-profits and other organizations that buy social network advertisements. It's about making their end-users happy."

Bee also believes that social media will go through various periods of disillusionment (Friendster and MySpace anyone). At one time, MySpace generated more traffic than Google. Enter Facebook, bye, bye MySpace.

Meet me on the web ...

You can't have a conversation about social media today and not include Facebook, which has become the unequivocal leader. With more than 800 million people connected through the social media site, if it were a country, it would be the world's third-largest, after India and China.

Along with its social connection capabilities, Facebook continues to

“I always take the theory of disillusionment with a grain of salt when it comes to technology. It’s a tool. People aren’t using it as much as they could.”

– Scott Klososky, Founder & Chairman, Alkami Technology

expand its reach by becoming a powerful branding tool – with no apparent cost of entry – for today’s brands. Take Starbucks, which uses the site to help brand its iconic name. To date, Starbucks has more than 26 million Facebook fans. And while you would think more brands would develop strategic and forward-thinking campaigns to maximize this reach, it hasn’t happened.

And therein lies a key disillusionment topic: The challenge, as experts see it, is for brands to evolve from simply being a company with a product to becoming a valuable source for interesting, entertaining and useful content.

Amy Bruckman, associate professor for the School of Interactive Computing at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, believes this is an area where social media will continue to evolve. “What social media will become will be quite different from what we see today,” she says. “The total volume of usage and the number of people we stay in contact with, I believe, will change. Right now, it’s just too much, and it’s unsustainable. I believe over time, people will get smarter about what ties they wish to maintain and what ties they don’t.”

Social media’s textbook definition is that it is a web- or mobile-based technology that relies on communication – a definition that covers a lot of ground. So, what do the 10 most frequently visited websites have in common? They offer users a variety of ways to share news, multimedia, etc., with their friends or customers. When you add photos and videos, information travels fast – really fast.

“Social media represents a fundamental shift in consumer behavior,” Cloudspark’s Schmitt says. “While it used to be that brands could solely define and influence an audience, in today’s social world, consumers can be the audience or the author – or both – of a brand. However, one brand hiccup can resonate in social spheres for a very long time. We haven’t seen anything with that kind of impact and duration of impact – ever. It has changed our entire marketing mix.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Marketers are much less enthusiastic about social data and analytics, suggesting that demonstrating ROI remains a headache for many social media marketers. More than half of client-side respondents (54 percent) said that social media engagement is featured among the three most exciting opportunities, way ahead of mobile optimization (38 percent) and content optimization (37 percent). Social analytics is much further down the pecking order (eighth place).

THE NEXT BIG THING

So, what’s next for social media?

Jenny Schmitt, founder of Atlanta-based communications firm, Cloudspark, says social media will continue to attract, influence, and validate our everyday experiences. She shares her thoughts on what we may expect on social media’s new frontier.

LOOK AT ME, LOOK AT ME I – While we’ll see a bevy of new social channels competing to be the “Next Big Thing,” consumers will fatigue on the options and choose what best fits their time and lifestyle. Nobody wants 25 sites with 25 passwords for 25 seemingly identical offerings. We’ll either see the bankruptcy or the merging of “me-too” social channels, resulting in fewer large-scale social channels with niche channels meeting the needs of people with specific interests.

LOOK AT ME, LOOK AT ME II – We’ll see an increase in “visual-based” social networking, as people migrate from texts to more visual or visually enhanced connections better supported by mobile devices. This is a major opportunity for today’s marketers. Imagine being able to redefine your target audience based on the visual elements they freely offer through social channels.

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW – Social media will help marketers create hyper-personalized and real-time outreach to target consumers. This will require further development of the tools marketers need in real-time, and a way to store, reference and reach consumers using those tools through the channels the consumer prefers.

It's All About Timing

When it comes to marketing, understanding when to send your message can be as important as the message itself.

Ad guru Lester Wunderman once said that marketers always could figure out what to sell, how to sell and to whom to sell. What they often can't figure out is when to sell. As consumers become more skilled at filtering irrelevant messages delivered across myriad marketing channels, the tolerance fuse is getting shorter.

While marketers are doing a better job of getting the right message to the right person, it's becoming more important to send that message at the right time. Sending timely messages requires having a clear understanding of your customer's situation to generate the best event-based marketing activity.

What's Trigger-Based Marketing?

This is where something called trigger-based (or event-based) marketing comes into play. Trigger-based marketing works on the premise that you communicate with your customers at the precise time they have a high propensity to purchase. Trigger-based marketing analyzes customer behavior to identify changes (triggers) that may indicate the need for a new product or service. Cross-sections of industry opinions suggest that those who engage in trigger-based marketing programs can see as much as a 400 percent improvement in response rates.

While some might link trigger-based marketing to email campaigns, this marketing technique can work just as well in digital, print-based direct mail or text messaging. With trigger-based marketing, all these mechanisms share a direct, two-way communication channel between the brand and the individual, maximizing the potential for a one-to-one response.

Trigger-based campaigns can and should, by their very nature, use all types of media – web, direct mail, social and mobile – in combination.

Triggers for effective marketing campaigns include everything from life-changing events to external market changes. Following are some examples of trigger-based opportunities that can drive marketing efforts.

Life Events

Customer life events can have major marketing implications. Such events might include the purchase of a new home, a birthday, a wedding anniversary or marriage, or retirement. A simple example exists in the food service market – some restaurants like to detect prospective patrons who are new to the area or provide special offers to loyal customers on birthdays or anniversaries.

Expiration Dates/Reminders

Products and promotions often have expiration dates that can be used to trigger an appropriate marketing action. These might include the maturity of a certificate of deposit, or ongoing and repetitive services that require reminder notices. These range from automotive services to appointment reminders for pets. For example, veterinary offices with personalized reminders that can be printed or sent via email or text to ensure customer loyalty and retention, as well as a secure income stream for the veterinary practice.

Customer Transactions

Changes in purchasing patterns, spending patterns or account deposits also can indicate your consumers' future buying intentions. A retailer can understand what merchandise to promote next, and when, based on a customer's recent purchases, as well as frequent purchase combinations made by other customers in that same demographic. The transaction data for customers who just bought a specific product can be used to determine add-on products for promotion. This data also can show which customers to thank for a recent purchase with a special offer that will prompt them to come back and spend more.

External Events

A number of external factors exist in today's dynamic business environment. External triggers are tied to changing market conditions and competitive activity. External (industry-wide) triggers can include industry reshaping mergers and acquisitions, regulations, legislation and other factors that may change the prospects for an entire industry, region or category.

Trigger-based marketing means delivering the right message when the customer has a high propensity to react. So, what are you waiting for? It is time to pull the marketing trigger.



By Barb Pellow

Sending timely messages requires having a clear understanding of your customer's situation to generate the best event-based marketing activity.

Barb Pellow is a group director at infoTrends (www.infotrends.com), a market research and consulting firm. She helps companies develop marketing strategies that expand and grow business opportunities. You can reach her at barb_pellow@infotrends.com.

The Donation Trifecta: Direct Mail, Email, and Social Media

In December Mail Print bundled data, digital, and print to raise awareness and funds for Harvesters Food Network. Through Mail Print's Set An Extra Plate Multi-Channel Marketing Campaign Harvester's pantry is \$63,000 fuller.

Each year Mail Print uses its holiday greeting card to not only celebrate the season but also focus on the needs of others. We crafted a multi-channel marketing campaign that included a holiday greeting, an awareness campaign for Harvesters Food Network, a donation request piece, and a social share component that doubled its reach and results.

By telling a visually compelling story through this multi-channel campaign rather than sending a simple holiday card, Mail Print held true to its mission of giving to the community, specifically to an organization that maximizes every donation by being able to feed five people with every dollar donated.

Early December Mail Print sent a holiday card to 2,700 customers, prospects and friends that shared a story of Susan B. Anthony starting the practice of setting an extra plate. The card contained three decorative paper ornaments to hang in their offices that had trackable QR codes to lead visitors and employees to a landing page about how to donate to Harvesters and have their donation doubled via matching funds secured by Mail Print.

The holiday card also directed each recipient to

visit a personalized landing page (PURL) that you can view here www.MailPrintCares.com/KristinaSmith5.

"When Mail Print shared their desire to execute the Set an Extra Plate campaign we weren't in a position to take mobile donations," said Vanessa Herring, Harvesters Director of Annual Giving.

"With Mail Print's leadership and the help of Digital Evolution Group we got on board really fast, and with the success of the campaign we will be doing more cross media and mobile integrated efforts in the future."

— Vanessa Herring, Harvesters
Director of Annual Giving

"With Mail Print's leadership and the help of Digital Evolution Group we got on board really fast, and with the success of the campaign we will be doing more cross media and mobile integrated efforts in the future."

SOCIAL SHARE

The cause spread through social media. More than 2056 additional persons received the opportunity to support Harvesters because the campaign links were shared through social networks and the insert ornaments. The micro sites were also shared

more than 100 times through Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

Gina Danner shared a little insight in the company's holiday philosophy. "The great thing about a well executed marketing effort is that it has the chance to create exponential results." Danner continues, "we spent roughly \$3,500 on the effort and were able to create \$63,000 in value to a great organization." By thinking bigger and building on an already planned effort for a multi-touch, multi-media campaign, Mail Print was able to create significant value.



By The Numbers

- Mailed 2,700 pieces
- 2,185 people visited mailprintcares.com
- Over 100 people shared the story through their social networks
- \$63,150 raised

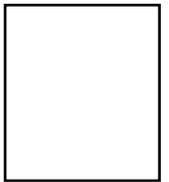
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