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## Social Marketing Has People Talking

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MySpace. Facebook. LinkedIn. Hundreds of millions of Internet users flock to virtual destinations called social networking sites every month. While they connect with friends and colleagues, others tag and share their favorite bookmarked sites at del.icio.us, generate volumes of educational content at wikipedia, and contribute in droves to more than 71 million blogs across the World Wide Web (Technorati, May 2007). Across all of these channels, visitors have moved from spectators to participants in real-time conversations with each other. That makes their activity *social*. And the various media through which people are engaging, whether blogs, wikis, news sites, forums, or video sharing sites, are now *marketing* launch pads. *Social marketing* leverages the participatory nature of the Web to create viral appeal for businesses and their brands.

### Here's how to integrate social marketing into your organization's mix:

First, think of social marketing as spreading brand love and recognition. For many B2B companies, face-to-face marketing is the most influential method for impacting purchase decisions. How can you introduce enough prospects to your sales force if few people have heard of your company? Demand generation efforts benefit greatly from online branding, especially when supported by customer input.

Second, provide the best medium for your users to become advocates for your brand. Through a moderated forum or blog on your site, not only do you monitor conversation but you also engage with the users through posts and comments. Host a microsite to distribute materials that can be forwarded to colleagues, tagged, bookmarked, and blogged about, and also provide an RSS feed, which alerts users when you post new items to your site.

Third, optimize. Social marketing optimization (SMO) includes tactics such as providing for easy tagging and bookmarking of your site and offering content that travels. White papers, PDFs, and audio and video files all encourage quality links to your site that boost your search engine rankings.

Fourth, act now in exploring social networking opportunities in your industry. While social networking for B2B seems in its infancy when compared to consumer-focused services like MySpace and Facebook, it is on the rise. Empower early adopters to support your online marketing, and watch the trend evolve.

### An example of applying social marketing to your business:

Susan needs widgets. She found the website for your company - ACME Corp. - through a Google search, thanks to the inbound links you've encouraged and through the visibility you've garnered through Search Engine Optimization (SEO). She reads your white paper on widgets and uses the forwarding feature to pass it along to her team.

When ACME Corp. distributes a press release about the widgets 2.0 launch, Susan gets the update, because she has set up a news feed on her browser home page that's triggered by





mention of “widgets.” When she re-visits your site, she peruses your blog and likes what she sees. She and her team are sold on the product and make a purchase.

After the purchase, Susan is back at your site registering to write an honest product review. Potential clients value her opinion, sparking conversations. Because you have captured Susan's email address, she is first to hear about your product releases, making her a valuable, viral voice within her team. Social marketing has played a role in all phases of your engagement - from lead generation to sale and beyond in your well-nurtured relationship. Plus, your interaction has followed a trackable process, allowing you to show ROI.

### **Conclusion**

Social marketing isn't only happening on MySpace and Facebook. B2B companies are implementing social marketing strategies in their own outreach efforts. When clients submit, vote, tag, post, or discuss, they become great allies in the increasingly social business world. Your prospects and customers become a part of your sales and your SEO teams when you provide them with the tools they need. Add social marketing to a strong mix of marketing tactics, and your organization is afforded the advantage of an even greater reach.

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