

# digit@ di@logue

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT NEW MEDIA

**Digital Dialogues - Lexington Advertising Club**

Social Media Starter Kit

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Social media strategy uses objectives, tools and outcomes to serve as your road map for navigating a journey. Social media - much like any journey - requires attention, decision-making, and pace.

Social media should be treated not as a bolt-on solution, but more as a set of tools, ideas and methodology which combine to facilitate your ultimate goal: first-person insights and interactive dialog.

Just as in the off-line world, social media relationships and conversations can be nuanced, require undivided attention, and may ebb and flow over time. At its core, social media makes it easier to discover, preserve, extend and interact with conversations already taking place about you, your brand, and your interests. It is not a panacea or plague of any sort, so we offer these objectives and these recommended tools to begin your journey of discovery, connection, and interaction.

## **Objective: Start with Listening**

You've got two ears and one mouth, so let's begin by getting a lay of the land.

- Google Alerts is a service that scours many corners of the Internet to find mentions of the keywords or topics of your choice. Consider subscribing to mentions of your brand, your products, competitive and industry interests, or even more esoteric interests.

<http://google.com/alerts>

- Google Insights allows you to apply filters or lenses of time, geography and keyword context to your searches.

<http://www.google.com/insights/search/>

- Perspctv.com is an interesting web tool that aggregates, compares, and visualizes large flows of data from the internet.

<http://www.perspctv.com/q/dominos.papa+johns.pizza+hut>


- It is highly likely that a customer, vendor, client or prospect has already used some form of social media to mention your product, brand or unmet need for a solution you can provide. Use these simple tools to peer into the vast abyss of available content and find some gems to explore.

<http://blogsearch.google.com>

<http://www.blogpulse.com>

<http://search.twitter.com>

<http://www.twing.com> (search the forums and bulletin boards that traditional search engines can miss)

- If you haven't already, sign up for a new home page that serves as a customized personal dashboard. Subscribe to snippets from virtually all of your favorite sites and major media outlets; look for this icon: 

<http://my.yahoo.com>

<http://igoogle.com>

<http://netvibes.com>

- Explore social bookmarking sites to see how others have categorized and commented on your site, industry, competitors, etc.:

<http://delicious.com>

<http://stumbleupon.com>



- Sign up for Google Reader and begin collecting subscriptions to your favorite sites and other regularly updated content

<http://google.com/reader>

Learn more about RSS and what it means to your online content consumption habits: [video](#)

- If Google Reader is not your cup of tea, consider using a service like Tabbloid to receive a printable PDF digest of RSS feeds in your email inbox.

<http://tabbloid.com>

### Objective: Plant the seeds

G.I. Joe taught us all that "knowing is half the battle" so once we've taken stock of the volume, tone, sentiment, and behavioral insights of your target groups, we can start to engage our audiences in a proactive and appropriate manner.

- Join and build a profile on Facebook. You might already know something about this popular social networking site and its well-earned hype. Perhaps you knew that 92% of *all* college students in the U.S. are active members, but what you might not know is that the most rapidly growing segments are those over 25 years of age. Your fans, customers and competitors are out there: you should be too.



<http://facebook.com>

- Join and build a profile on LinkedIn.com. Think of this site as a living, dynamic version of your Rolodex and resume, all rolled into one. Connect with past, current and future colleagues and explore the many advanced features and distractions (like apps, groups, forums) to uncover more value. When used effectively, this site serves as a powerful resource for job hunting, sales lead generation, or even a knowledge base for solutions to tough questions.



<http://www.linkedin.com>

- In your previous search of blogs, you may have found some blogs you particularly enjoyed reading. Whether it was an interesting trade rag, an annoyed customer, or a potential business partner, virtually any person that participates in the exercise of self-expression via social media will enjoy a dialog with someone that finds their perspectives interesting. Leaving a thoughtful comment on a blog is tantamount to a social media handshake which helps to build relationships on- and off-line. In many instances, authors find more value in the comments left by others than in the original content they published.

<http://alltop.com> offers a virtual magazine rack of top blogs by category

- You've used the search function of twitter when you were assessing online buzz earlier, but now it's time to dig in and add your own two cents. Create an account and complete your profile, preferably with your real name, not your brand or agency's – the brand you're representing here is yourself and not your company, your pet, or some cryptic moniker. Start following other people with whom you share similarities or differences in interests, geography, perspectives and expertise. People use twitter in a wide variety of ways, but the most effective use may be the many-to-many communication style vs. the one-to-many or one-to-one interactions of more traditional media.



<http://twitter.com>

### Objective: Nurture your efforts, then reap the harvest

After building up your knowledge and capabilities in listening and participating, you might be ready to rip off those training wheels and start extracting more significant value from social media. Remember: for better or worse, these activities, tools and methods are designed to equip yourself with first-hand feedback from real people. What you do with this feedback is ultimately up to you and your objectives, but please understand that some of these insights may be so frank that they're difficult to digest, may perpetuate a certain bias, or may even be extremely difficult to come by.

After first listening and then hiking through the steppes of the social media landscape, it is now time to formalize your voice and begin contributing to the larger ecosystem.

- Use a blog to give your communications a boost in searchability and reach.

<http://wordpress.com>

<http://www.sixapart.com/products> (paid service)

<http://blogger.com>

*Consult an experienced pro to make sure your solution meets your technical, business and creative objectives.*

- Create your own groups on LinkedIn: if you don't find a group in which your unique interests are discussed or your conversational needs find kindred participants, start your own Group and invite others to join and participate in the discussions. From college and workplace alumni groups to professional societies and hobbyists, many opportunities for valuable feedback and insights abound in LinkedIn group participation.

Ask and answer questions to build up your network, establish your expertise, or even generate leads.

- Create and maintain Fan Pages on Facebook: Got a product or idea that you think others would like? Start a Fan Page and invite others to profess their love. Fan Pages offer a tremendous opportunity for brand ambassadors to talk directly to their favorite products, brands, musicians, schools, etc. Many people merely show their allegiance by joining the page, but you might also find a very vocal, frequently benevolent fan base that will provide you with invaluable commentary.

A critical mass of fans also provide an interactive channel for customer-driven R&D or product development. Who better than your most loyal fans to help augment and refine a product?

- Consider creating or joining a pre-built social network for niche interests on a site like Ning. Note: some content NSFW



<http://ning.com>

- For more advanced and metrics-driven insights, you might consider engaging a full-scale brand monitoring and insight solutions:

<http://radian6.com>

<http://nielsenonline.com>

<http://visibletechnologies.com>

<http://motivequest.com>

- These social networks are focused largely on business professionals and can be used in a variety of ways. Check out:

<http://linkedin.com>

<http://www.jigsaw.com>

<http://www.spoke.com>

- Numerous examples of social media optimization and customer-driven R&D abound. Here are a few to investigate:

<http://www.ideastorm.com>

<http://mystarbucksidea.force.com>

<http://mindstorms.lego.com>

Scott Clark

<http://www.websiteadvice.com>

888-OnTheWeb (888-668-4393)

859-268-0664

## **Organic Search Optimization**

Organic search optimization is an ongoing process that can significantly increase traffic to your website long-term. I'd estimate that 90% of small business websites have made no effort to rank well in search and therefore have received minimal financial rewards from their websites.

### **How Search Engines Work (Organic Listings)**

- Search Engines "Crawl" the web, but they recognize text and links more than graphics.
- Once a page has been "Crawled" - it is added to their index.
- When searches are done, the index is accessed and a search engine results page (SERP) is displayed.
- The order of sites on that page are determined by secret search engine algorithms, geography, personalization settings, and even previous searches.
- In general, the higher authority sites are at the top of the listings.

### **The Search Engines' Goals Should Be Compatible with Your Goals. Search Engines want to....**

- ...return satisfying results, free from SPAM.
- ...win the arms race between marketers and search engine algorithms.
- ...return results that are similar to what a human expert would give you in a gigantic library help desk.
- ...avoid irrelevant, annoying or harmful results (such as spyware and offensive material)

### **Succeeding in Organic Search Requires**

- Time and Initiative
- Keyword research
- High quality content that is "link-worthy"
- Well structured web pages
- Continual updates and out-bound linking
- Integration with off-line forms of marketing.

### **Gotchas!**

- Mismanaged Domain Names, or using someone else's domain name (e.g. wordpress.com, typepad.com, blogger.com)
- Splash Screens and Slow Loading Pages
- Poorly Structured Pages (tags, etc.)
- Hosting problems (slow site, site down often.)
- "Black Hat" Techniques (cloaking, buying links)
- Website redesigns without considering SEO (broken links, etc.)
- Overusing Flash, Javascript and other multi-media technologies.

### **Easy First Steps / Low Hanging Fruit**

- Stabilize your hosting and domain name.
- Get rid of your "splash" or "welcome" screen. Everyone hates them, including search engines.
- Register/Claim your business on Google Local, Yahoo Local, and Superpages.
- Set up Google Webmaster Central for your site.
- Fix website errors

### **Getting Professional Help**

- Website SEO audit is a smart first move.
- SEO Retainer Programs - let the SEO work with your team.
- Content Development - Link Bait Development

See <http://www.sitecreations.com/socialmedialinks> for links

### **Paid Search Optimization (Sponsored Listings / Pay Per Click Ads)**

Paid search can be the most effective, least expensive advertising model available for some businesses. But I find that more than 80% of campaigns are set up sub-optimally causing the waste of time, money, and unfortunate early-withdrawal (and lost opportunity.)

### **How Paid Search Works....**

- Google, Yahoo!, and Microsoft sell space on their search results pages
- They also have a network of sites that have "Ads by Google", etc. on them (content networks.)
- Businesses bid for advertisement position and frequency of display.
- Search network offerings show ads near search results pages based on keywords.
- Content network offerings show ads on web pages that carry the ads and are deemed "relevant" to the ads.
- Complex bidding models based on amount of a bid, relevance to the search, and previous searcher behavior determine the costs
- Billing may be Cost Per Click, Cost Per Thousand Impressions, or Cost Per Action.

### **Succeeding in Paid Search Requires:**

- Analytics and metrics to measure success.
- Extremely good keyword research
- Testing of every part of the sales funnel.
- A strong offer on the landing pages
- Properly organized campaigns.
- Integration with off-line forms of marketing (print, TV)

### **Next Steps for Paid Search Campaigns**

- Set up website analytics on your site and learn to use it.
- Develop offers (e.g. specials, white papers, etc.)
- Decide what you can sensibly spend (lifetime value per customer, value per sale)
- Set up your paid search ad groupings, keywords and match types (carefully)

### **Asking a Pro For Help:**

- Setting Up Analytics
- Paid Search Audit
- Paid Search Retainer
- Campaign Reorganization Project
- Landing Page Development

See <http://www.sitecreations.com/socialmedialinks> for links

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#### **Nick Huhn**

Nick works with companies to help them make the best use of the web. He's worked at or with organizations you know: Papa John's, Norton Healthcare, YUM! Brands. He's a self-proclaimed creative versatilist – meaning he likes to be involved in a lot of creative endeavors. Nick lives in Louisville with his wife and daughter.

<http://www.nickhuhn.com>

#### **Scott Clark**

Scott starting working in website development and internet marketing in 1994 while in Silicon Valley. Currently he spends most of his time working in the fast moving worlds of organic and paid search optimization, social medial marketing, split and multivariate testing of website offers, and integrated marketing strategies. He is an accredited Google Adwords Professional, a Yahoo! Small Business Partner, A Yahoo! Search Marketing Ambassador, and hold several certifications in web marketing skill sets.

<http://www.sitecreations.com>

#### **Jason Falls**

Jason is the Director of Social Media at Doe Anderson Advertising in Louisville. Jason's accomplishments include increasing online exposure for top brands, a 50% increase in PR for a national ad campaign, and developing multiple online marketing and advertising campaigns. He is also one of the founders of the Social Media Club in Louisville.

<http://www.jasonfalls.com>

#### **Moderator - Bill Dotson**

Bill recently purchased WebMedley – a web, e-mail, and domain name hosting company working with over 800 clients – and consults for a few companies interested in growing through the use of Internet technology. He lives in Lexington with his wife and three boys.

Bill's Company: <http://www.webmedley.com>

Personal site: <http://www.billdotson.com>