ExactTarget

WHITEPAPER

Expanding the Reach of Email Through Social Networks

Setting the Stage

Social media sites represent the newest gateway to the Internet. Google holds a secure position as the web search engine with the largest reach both globally and in the US, and Yahoo! maintains its number two position. However, social networking giants Facebook and YouTube are gaining ground on these traditional gateways, and their global reach is growing significantly faster than their predecessors. As data from Alexa Internet shows, **users spend more time on social networks in an average day than they do on major portals like Google and Yahoo!** (Figure 1).

	Global Reach	3 Month Change	Time on Site (min/day)
Google	30.6%	9.9%	8.3
Yahoo!	26.4%	0.7%	10.1
YouTube	17.6%	4.8%	23.4
Facebook	16.6%	32.3%	25.4

Figure 1   *Source: Alexa.com as of April, 6, 2009*

Given the global reach, rapid adoption, and high engagement, social media sites have marketers salivating at the potential these environments offer to engage with customers and prospects. The challenge is how to best facilitate *meaningful* interactions.

As noted in ExactTarget's *2008 Channel Preference Survey*, consumers are reluctant to invite marketers into these environments. Why? Because they don't want to see another personal communication channel overrun with irrelevant messages from commercial entities. The good news is that there are numerous examples of brands that have developed extensive followings in these environments. This proves that there are opportunities for marketers and consumers to interact on social networking sites—if done so appropriately.

Social Media as an Email List Growth Tactic

As part of a joint research project between Ball State University, the Email Marketer's Club, and ExactTarget, the *2009 Email Marketing List Growth Study* conducted a survey of 351 email marketers and their colleagues in March 2009. Survey results showed **a significant increase in marketers' intent to integrate email and social media programs in 2009**. One tactic that has sparked the imagination of marketers is letting email subscribers share messages with their social networks in hopes of driving increased email program registrations.

In 2008, 13% of email marketers surveyed attempted to grow their email programs through the use of social sharing links included in email messages. **This number is set to explode in 2009 with 46% of marketers planning to use social sharing capabilities in the coming year—representing nearly a fourfold increase.**
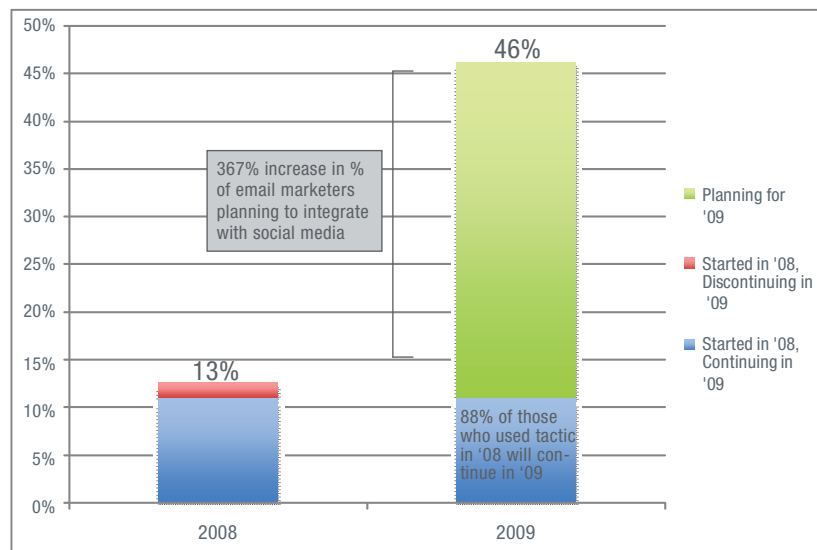
What's Inside?

ExactTarget

Growth of Social Media Integration as a List Growth Tactic

To date, the results from social media "pioneers" are mixed. Business-to-business marketers report significantly more success sharing to social networks as a list growth tactic than consumer-focused marketers, especially in terms of quantity of new subscribers. Business-to-consumer marketers report that while the number of new subscribers acquired through social media sites is low compared to other list growth tactics, the quality of new subscribers is very high. So while many marketers are seduced by the large numbers, **pioneers have found social media marketing to be a quality over quantity list growth tactic.**

The distinct experiences of B2B and B2C marketers may be explained in what we already know about the mindset of participants in different social networks. For example, while LinkedIn intentionally facilitates business relationships—and thereby encourages commercial interaction—Facebook focuses on personal relationships where commercial messages are more likely to be considered intrusive.

Insights from the Social Media Pioneers

B2C marketers shouldn't be discouraged by the results of this survey. In recent interviews, we asked several social media pioneers to share what they'd learned in the past year. These marketers were optimistic about their experiences with social media and offered several tips for those who are considering integrating social media within their email marketing programs.

1. Currently, there are very few established best practices, so trying new things is the key to learning what works and what doesn't.

2. Consumers are sensitive to "marketing speak"; therefore, stay away from traditional marketing lingo and focus on relevance and authenticity.

3. Social networks represent a distinct audience and mindset. As a result, organizations should think about this medium differently than traditional marketing channels. Develop unique strategies specifically for social networks, keeping in mind that users engage in each network differently.

4. Consider broadening your definition of success. Traditional direct marketing metrics are not necessarily a good measure of success in social media.

Want more ideas?

This whitepaper contains just a few of the key findings from our upcoming *2009 Email Marketing List Growth Study*. If you're looking for more ideas on how to grow your subscriber list, watch for the full whitepaper coming in May.

See Social Media in Action

Several ExactTarget clients have used social media tactics to not only build their subscriber lists, but also help establish their brand. Check out the examples below to see social media marketing in action.

As the world's largest independent new and used bookstore, Powell's Books recently experimented with social media by driving people to their Facebook page. Sam Whitmore, online marketing developer for Powell's Books says, "First, we focused on getting people to become Facebook fans by including links to our fan page on our website. Now that we have built our fan base we have started to send updates inviting people to participate in exclusive programs that require them to register on our site." According to Whitmore, the company even capitalized on a major holiday as a way to get in touch with customers. He says, "For Valentine's Day, we sent an update to all our Facebook fans with a $5 offer that required people to register in order to get the offer. It was a huge success."

The makers of Carmex® lip balm, Carma Labs, launched a social media campaign in November 2008—called My Carmex Kiss—in conjunction with relaunching their website. On mycarmexkiss.com users are able to upload a photo that can be animated with different "kisses" and forwarded on to friends. The site gives users a choice of how and where they want to send their "kiss"—either through email, text message, or via a social site.

According to Carma Labs President Paul Woelbing, the majority of kisses are sent to friends through email. However, social networks have given the campaign significant exposure. So, while the actions of a few visitors who posted their kiss to social networks helped drive traffic to the site, the majority of people prefer to share the experience through email.

At the start of the campaign, Carmex had a database of 3,000 email subscribers. By Valentine's Day, three months later, Carmex had over 30,000 subscribers. The 10-fold increase was driven exclusively through the Carmex Kiss campaign. The key? Giving visitors a choice. "We want visitors to share the experience with their friends, but we don't want to force them to use a channel they are uncomfortable with," says Woelbing. "By offering visitors choices, we are learning a lot about the dynamics of integrating email, social media, and text messaging—namely that they complement each other very well."

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>
> — Paul Woelbing
> President, Carma Labs

Figure 2: My Carmex Kiss Campaign Website

As the world's most popular and largest online travel community, TripAdvisor has used social media to help establish the company's brand through a Facebook application they created called "Cities I've Visited." The application is an interactive travel map that Facebook users can download and pin all the countries, cities, towns, and even suburbs they've visited. To date, more than 30 million people have used the application.

The "Cities I've Visited" application has helped drive more involvement with the brand by increasing awareness of the website and requiring people to register with TripAdvisor in order to share their map. TripAdvisor's application has become one of the most popular downloads on Facebook. "One of the reasons "Cities I've Visited" has been so successful is that it aligns with the desire for self-expression that is so ingrained in the Facebook community," says Morgan Stewart, ExactTarget's director of research and strategy.

TripAdvisor has also used social media to increase brand awareness by creating an online philanthropic campaign that involved its Facebook members. TripAdvisor made a commitment to contribute $1,000,000 to charities as directed by members of the Facebook community by allocating the money to five pre-selected charities based on how the community voted. The campaign was a huge success, receiving more than 1,000,000 votes on Facebook and helping to establish TripAdvisor as a sincere and trustworthy brand.
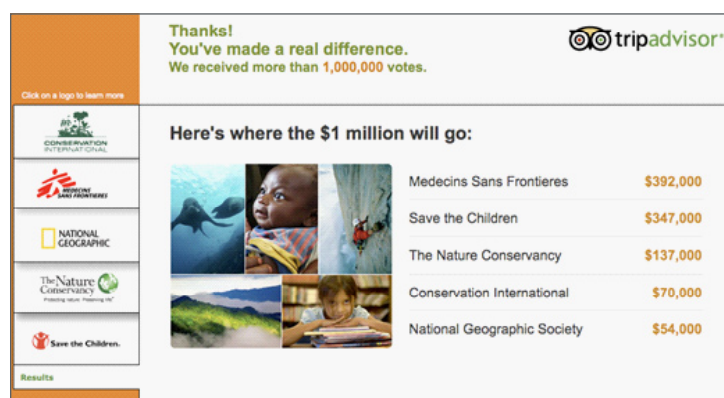

Figure 3: TripAdvisor Philanthropic Campaign

Summary

Integrating social media into your broader marketing program should be an ongoing effort. Marketers looking to expand their email programs through social media in the months ahead should keep this top of mind. While some marketers will undoubtedly see success by simply enabling subscribers to use social sharing tools, **the larger opportunity is to start leveraging existing email subscribers to help build out online communities.** Once those communities start to take root, marketers can communicate key brand value propositions to the community and drive traffic back to their sites.

Want more insights on ways to grow your subscriber list? Then watch for our *2009 Email Marketing List Growth Study* debuting in May. You've already learned in this whitepaper about the dramatic increase in the percentage of email marketers looking to integrate with social networks to help grow their email list. But did you know there is another list growth tactic that is increasing even faster? Find out what it is (and more!) in our *2009 Email Marketing List Growth Study* whitepaper.

List Growth Webinar

Look for details on an upcoming webinar where Tamara Gielen, prominent blogger (b2bemailmarketing.com) and founder of the Email Marketing Club, and Morgan Stewart, ExactTarget's Director of Research and Strategy, will share key findings from the *2009 Email Marketing List Growth Study* and examples of best-in-class list growth programs.

ExactTarget Social Forward

Now that you've had a chance to learn the many reasons why integrating social media into your one-to-one marketing programs is important, here's a look at how you can do that with ExactTarget's new Social Forward feature.

What is Social Forward?

ExactTarget Social Forward is the first...

- Social media solution to support multiple strategies
- To allow sharing to more than 20 networks
- Customer-proven social sharing solution.

ExactTarget Social Forward makes it easy for your customers to engage with and share your email marketing messages. By giving your customers this control, you can extend the reach of your marketing messages, drive deeper engagement with customers and their online communities, and build your subscriber list.

Social Forward Feature Highlights

ExactTarget Social Forward is comprised of the following three parts:

• **ShareThis Integration** Our integration with ShareThis makes it easy for your subscribers to share content to over 20 online networks and communities while providing you the metrics you need to create a strategy around your social content. Identify top networks, content, and subscribers for sharing and quantify the results of your strategy.

• **Direct to Social** Our direct to social capability is a simple way for your subscribers to share content with the click of a button. Allow your subscribers to share content directly to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and many other online communities.

• **Forward to a Friend** Allow your subscribers to share your message directly with their friends via email. Forward to a Friend enables subscribers to include a personal note about your message and send it on to their friends via email. You'll be able to track how many times your message was forwarded and how many new subscribers you've gained as a result.

ExactTarget's Social Forward solution gives marketers the industry's first social media integration that allows for multiple ways to leverage social sharing and provides the industry's most complete solution to enable and track social sharing directly to social networks.

Learn More

ExactTarget's Social Forward feature will be available soon. If you're interested in Social Forward, simply call 866.362.4538 for more information or visit www.exacttarget.com.

3 Days. 45,000 Fans.

Global pizza giant Papa John's recently experienced success with social media marketing after beta-testing ExactTarget's Social Forward feature in March during its NCAA-themed email marketing campaign. The campaign offered consumers a chance to win a trip to the Final Four by joining Papa John's Facebook fan club. In the first three days of the campaign, Papa John's added **more than 45,000 fans** to its Facebook page, bringing the total number of fans to more than 270,000.