

Subscription Marketers: How to Monetize Web 2.0

A MarketingSherpa **Toolkit**



MarketingSherpa ToolKit:

Subscription Marketers: How to Monetize Web 2.0

ISBN: 978-1-932353-78-5

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GLOSSARY

Archived webinar: Previously-presented webinar, available for viewing for a specific time (possibly for a fee).

Attendee (aka participant): A webinar participant or audience member. Depending upon the level of interactivity, may be able to ask questions or take a more active role.

Host: The person(s) who created the meeting. They usually have the most “power” as far as controlling attendees’ access and settings.

Moderator: Sometimes the same as the host. The moderator generally makes the opening remarks and introduces speakers. They may also handle any Q&A segments.

Presenter: May be the same as a host and/or speaker. Depending on situation, may have varying levels of technical control.

Q&A: Ability of participant to ask questions through various means (including submitting them in advance or asking them live during webinar); host may include time in webinar schedule for Q&A portion.

Reporting: Data related to the webinar and its participants; examples of reporting data includes number of participants and level of interest.

Speaker: Person who presents information during the webinar. May not have full technical control (the ability to manage attendees’ permissions and access, for example).

Teleconference line: Phone line (may be toll-free for users) which allows participants to hear the audio elements and possibly ask questions.

Webcast: Online presentation which does not offer interactive elements.

Webinar: Short for Web-based seminar; a workshop or presentation which is broadcast live via the Internet; often involves interactive elements.

SECTION 1:

WHY CONTENT PUBLISHERS NEED WEB 2.0

Have you been slow to get on the Web 2.0 bandwagon? Readers and subscribers expect to see these elements. If your website doesn't have them, they may move onto other sites that do. Each disappointed visitor equals a lost subscriber or a failed conversion opportunity. Translation: Lost revenue. Flip the coin. Each visitor who finds an opportunity to interact with you can connect to your site and your content. Translation: New revenue source.

The cold hard truth is that if you don't offer interactive features, would-be subscribers can find plenty of other content providers who do. Many of your competitors – from huge corporate publishing conglomerates to niche online content providers – are already doing it, and probably doing it very well.

People are much more likely to become subscribers, and remain subscribers, if they feel a connection with your content. How do you help establish this connection? You use techniques in which readers – or people they identify with – contribute some of the content or actively play a role in how it's created or distributed.

TYPES OF WEB 2.0

Many tactics and strategies fall under the Web 2.0 umbrella. Here are some of the most popular:

Social networking

Social networking sites seem to have come out of nowhere and become a part of daily life over the past couple of years. Even consumers who don't go online much have heard of MySpace and Facebook.

From a marketing standpoint, these sites (MySpace in particular) have become places where authors, publishers and others in the creative/publishing industry can post a sample of their content and develop a fan following, which can lead to many subscribers and faithful readers.

Setting up an initial page on one of these sites is simple. You just go to the site, sign up by answering a few questions and choose a few design elements. But to really stand out in the crowd, you need to add bells and whistles in the form of widgets, applications and other creative touches.

These sites have given birth to an entire new cottage industry – companies devoted solely to creating and selling Facebook apps, for example, or MySpace page designs. See Section 4 for more on social networking

Blogging

Blogging is, perhaps, the easiest Web 2.0 tactic to master ... and the fastest to get up and running. Many early blogs consisted of people rambling on about the details of their daily lives. But blogging has become a phenomenon that has spread to every segment of the population.

SherpaTip: Check out <http://www.addthis.com> for a button you can download that will let users bookmark, subscribe and share your content easily. This button allows users to choose from several feed options.

SherpaTip: Your blog should look like a blog. If your blog looks too formal or has a corporate feel, it will turn off visitors. Blogs are designed to look casual and loosely structured.

Blogs can be a great venue for promoting your content without coming on too strong. An example: Let some of your writers blog informally about their upcoming stories or current projects.

Another great aspect about blogging: The “Comments” section provides you with immediate (and often very frank and detailed) feedback on what readers think of your blog.

Blogs can range from no-frills text-only versions to fancy video-enhanced varieties. Creating a blog is way easier than you might think. You can use programs like Wordpress or Typepad that are very simple.

You can distribute your blog via various feeds (Blogger offers about a half dozen feed options). The down side is that if readers don’t need to come to your site to see the blog, they won’t see any ads or other content posted there.

Not sure how to create a blog? Check out our cheat sheet and then use our checklist in Section 7 to walk you through the steps.

What Can You Do With It?

A blog is a good way to post news, opinions and other commentary. But you can do lots of other things on your blog besides posting basic text. Try adding podcasts, pictures, videos, photo albums or even maps. Photos are the easiest thing to add – usually, you just click a “photo” icon and then upload the image.

Use hotlinks liberally. Sprinkle your blog with links – both internal (pointing to other sites under your company umbrella) and external.

Tag each posting with search-friendly terms. After each posting, add as many relevant tags as possible. It will increase the likelihood that searches will lead to your blog.

Connect with other bloggers. A fast and easy way to get more traffic on your blog is to have other bloggers link to it. You can also leave comments on other blogs (complete with a link to your own blog).

Create an inventory of posts if you're out of touch for a while. Services like Blogger offer scheduled publishing. You can "bank" a blog post (or several) and schedule them to go live at a future time.

On the Horizon

Later this year, Google will unveil a new blogging product called Google Weblogs. It will offer many cool features, such as the ability to post directly into Google search results.

Case Study: How to Get Tons of Publicity on a Tiny Budget

Author and financial expert Janine Bolon admits she knew nothing about Internet marketing when she started writing books in 2005. Instead, she stuck with traditional publicity tactics, such as interviews on television and radio and personal appearances.

As Bolon's book count grew to four and she added recorded audio seminars and other products, the demands of her writing and training career began to conflict with her duties as a mother and PhD student. "I needed to build a relationship quickly with a client base."

Her answer: Internet marketing. But because of those time constraints, even online tactics had to pull double or triple duty by promoting her financial education brand, not just a single product.

Rather than specific campaigns for each of her books and other products, Bolon developed an approach that provided publicity for different book titles, but also established links in the blogosphere that brought readers to her homepage, where they could see the range of products available. Here are the five steps she took:

Strategy #1. Revamp homepage

Bolon's first homepage looked homemade (because it was) and was light on in-depth content that would help potential customers learn about her financial management techniques.

So she created a new site that offered lots of free content, including:

- A blog
- Links to relevant financial sites
- FAQs about her techniques
- Testimonials

Bolon also created two URLs, which were directed to the same page:

- SmartCentsInc.com, the name of her company
- MakingMiddleClassMillionaires.com, which is more descriptive of her services and goals

Strategy #2. Start email newsletter

Bolon wanted to reach out to existing customers and prospects, so she created a biweekly email newsletter, My 2 Cents. She chose to write longer articles (up to 500 words) because she knew most of her audience or prospects were potential readers.

But she aimed the content of the two articles in each issue to her two reader types:

- Those in debt who needed to get out
- Those who didn't have debt trouble but wanted to be frugal or build wealth

She added a signup form to her homepage and invited attendees at seminars and speaking engagements to join her mailing list.

Step #3. Solicit reviews from financial bloggers

To promote her books and drive traffic to her new Web site, Bolon sought out bloggers dedicated to the same subjects – personal finance, debt reduction, frugal living, etc. Her goal was to get them to review one of her books and describe her financial planning methods.

First, Bolon emailed all her newsletter subscribers and offered a free book of their choice to anyone who had a blog that had been running for at least a year and was willing to write a review.

Next, she searched the Internet and found a financial site that listed the top 100 personal finance blogs. She took a personalized approach to reach out to those bloggers:

- After spending time reading articles on a blog, she emailed the author, commenting on a few specific items she read and what she thought of them.
- The email then described similarities in her financial approach and philosophy and pointed out how her books, newsletter and other products could be of service to the blogger's audience.
- She offered a free book in exchange for a review on the blog.

Step #4. Set up Google Alerts to track mentions/reviews

To keep track of the exposure her books received online, Bolon set up Google Alerts for keywords, such as her name, "debt" and "personal finance." Each day, the system automatically packaged new mentions into an email alert.

When she saw a new blog post or Web site mentioning her name, posting a book review or link to her site, Bolon tracked sales and newsletter subscriptions for the next seven days to see what impact the mention had.

Step #5. Send handwritten note thanking reviewers

Bolon mailed a handwritten thank-you note to each blogger who reviewed a book. Her goal was to build a network of like-minded bloggers and Web sites that could be useful to her or her readers in the future. "I don't see bloggers as a one-time shot. I want to build a rapport with them."

RESULTS: Bolon's personalized outreach to bloggers is building strong connections. 95% of the bloggers contacted from the top 100 list wrote a review of one of her books. "It's been tremendously beneficial. A lot of the bloggers tell me, 'This is the first time an author has emailed me. It's usually an agent or a publisher.' "

That publicity is paying off, too. Book sales always rise during the week after a new review, with the total increase varying by the reach of each blog. For example, a review on a popular personal finance blog with a readership of 20,000 delivered five times Bolon's typical weekly sales.

Because Bolon allows bloggers to choose which of her four books to review, she gets publicity for all her titles, not just her newest book. Surprisingly, though, sales of her 5-CD audio set are getting the biggest boost. In the six months since she began receiving blog reviews, CD sales are up 40%.

It wasn't a result she expected, since the reviews focus on her books, not the CD set. But she thinks the trend illustrates an important characteristic of the blog

audience. “Most of their reading time is done on Web sites and blogs. When they leave their computer, they don’t want to read a book, they want to listen to something on their iPod.”

Sending handwritten notes is a practice for which Bolon has long-term goals, expecting that bloggers will remember her months down the road when they’re looking for more subjects to write about or an expert to interview or to answer questions for readers about financial coaches. But she is already seeing hints of the promotional benefits of her personal approach: a few of the book reviews have already led to additional podcast interviews.

User-generated content

User-generated content was deemed important enough by Time magazine that it named “You” as its Person of the Year for 2006. And things have only gotten hotter. Countless news stories, in fact, have been broken thanks to video clips posted on YouTube.

Aside from YouTube, one of the most well-known sites featuring UGC is Wikipedia. Other sites range from the photo-sharing site Flickr to the travel discussion site TripAdvisor. (You may have noticed that there is a great deal of overlap among Web 2.0 categories; technically, blogs and MySpace pages would also qualify as user-generated content.)

SherpaTip: Motivate users to submit content by implementing a rewards program or by holding contests or giveaways that only people who submit content are eligible to win. The Oxygen Network ran a contest to get viewers to create their own casting video and upload it to the site. During the nine-day submission period, the contest received 220 entries that were viewed more than 100,000 times. The contest was promoted via email to 5,000 subscribers who opted into the promotion via the website or at the dedicated microsite.

3 real-life UGC tips from MarketingSherpa:

- Make your UGC promotion into a big annual event, complete with trumpets blasting, such as our annual Wisdom Report, Viral Hall of Fame or Email Awards.
- Consider conducting surveys. We do about 10 per year involving various Sherpa reader groups (not everyone sees all of them) and then feed the results right back to the audience as articles. One example is the Sherpa-powered annual business technology survey.
- Keep it steady. If you plug away with the request for submissions in every

issue you publish year after year, someday you'll get some. It took nearly two years, for instance, to get enough job postings submitted each week so we could go off life support of drumming them up ourselves for our Career Newsletter.

For a quick primer on user-generated content, check out our UGC cheat sheet in Section 7.

Video

Video content and targeted ads are quickly become a “must have” Web 2.0 tactic for content providers who want to attract visitors – and convert them into paying subscribers.

Online video is one of the hottest areas on the Web, with ad-supported services epitomized by YouTube one of the most popular models to follow – but not the only one. All publishers with high-quality products and targeted niches can generate ROI with video.

For best results, your video should be professional quality (although a lot of leeway is given to video created by users). You also need to update your video offerings frequently. Subscribers will get bored quickly if the content goes stale.

Give subscribers an exclusive look at your video content for a certain period of time before making it widely available on YouTube or MySpace (or on a public section of your own site).

NOTE: Many online video-sharing sites allow you to organize all your videos in one place, which lets you maintain an easily accessible “online library.”

Example #1: Total Training

Here are six steps that helped Total Training, a software training company, use video to lift subscriptions 40%:

1. Offer a limited trial
2. Make registration easy (the shorter the sign-up form the better)
3. Promote trial program to DVD buyers
4. Promote trials through partners, resellers and affiliates
5. Send survey and discount offer to non-converters
6. Create video tour (a one-minute video presentation highlighting key features)

You can see creative samples from Total Training's video campaign here:
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/cs/totaltraining/study.html>

Example #2: West 49

Youth-oriented site West 49 used a combination of online video and user-generated content to lift conversions 27%. Here are some strategies that worked for them:

- Promote TV ads online
- Create a separate video section
- Tap partners for unique content

Check out samples from West 49's video campaign here:
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/cs/west49/study.html>

SherpaTip: To get maximum conversions, a portion of your video (or prominently displayed text accompanying it) must clearly convey the added features/benefits of the paid versions. Visitors shouldn't assume they're already getting the whole enchilada for free.

When it comes to online videos, YouTube is king (it accounted for 1 out of every 3 US online videos in January 2008, according to comScore). For tips on creating a YouTube video, see our cheat sheet and checklist to make sure you stay on track. See our cheat sheet and checklist in Section 7.

Tagging

Tagging (also known as social bookmarking) is the high-tech version of the water cooler. It's used by sites such as Digg. When people spot an interesting news story, they "tag" it, either by submitting it to the Digg site or by voting on it once it is there. Deli.cio.us is another social bookmarking site that operates under a similar principle.

Podcasting

Podcasts – audio programs available for download online – are a popular Web 2.0 tactic now that many people listen to them on their iPod or other MP3 players.

10 Steps to Creating a Podcast

Starting a podcast program (usually an audio program available for download over the Internet) takes time, money and effort. But once you have the basics set up, adding more programs gets easier.

Audio costs range from \$1,000 to \$2,000, while video ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000. A program takes about eight hours of time to create: CEO, 2 hours; advertising, 3 hours; typing, 1 hour; editing, 2 hours.

Step #1. Start a podcast

- First, decide why you want to do a podcast. Begin the initiative to author quality content that your clients can't live without – subject matter that keeps them coming back. (Hint: Avoid regurgitating press releases.)
- Figure out what is going on inside your organization that has not been heard. Ask your experts to share the news. (Hint: What matters is not what you say, but what you do.)
- Avoid negative attention by not following a script. The panel discussed a now-infamous Starbucks podcast that didn't resonate with their audience because they presented the message in a corporate way.
- Offer the information your listener wants to hear; otherwise, they won't listen to it. (Hint: the listener, not your marketing person, controls the subscription.) Provide solutions with your message. For example: Give instructions on how to assemble a product.

Step #2. Make sure your podcast doesn't get lost on the home page

- You need to figure out who the listener is and spread the word. Decide what message to put in the feed so that it's recognized by the portals, such as iTunes, and results in maximum exposure. (Hint: iTunes is becoming as much of a search engine as Google.)
- Include the podcast on your company blog.
- Make it easy for your audience to download the content. (Hint: more people will sneak it to del.icio.us, a social bookmarks manager.)
- Look at the number of hits to the file. Technology to find out whether people actually listened to the podcast may not be available, but you can track down the number of complete downloads.
- Look at the amount of bandwidth transferred and divide it by the average amount downloaded. Find out how many people are accessing the feed on a regular basis.

Step #3. Convince your CEO that podcasts are successful

- Tell your boss how many leads the podcasts are generating. House your podcast in a unique URL. (Hint: you can see if you are generating sales leads by tracking the actual path that the user took once they landed on that page.)
- Producing a podcast will cost the same as writing a marketing piece. Podcasting is more compelling than magazine advertising because only a fraction of those who see the print ad are interested. Why pay a lot of money for a fraction if you can go directly to them? This way, you will build a niche relationship.

- Media coverage can be measured in addition to sales – you are driving traffic over to the client side rather than just having your story be thrown away along with the newspaper.

Step #4. Find an enthusiast to work on production

- After gathering the audio and completing the editing, figure out whether you want to assign the task in-house or hire a professional writer. (Hint: it's a good idea to bring in an experienced podcaster at the beginning. Later, there can be a handoff.)
- Make sure that the person is passionate about podcasting; the zeal will transpire.

Step #5. Integrate podcasting with an existing mail campaign

- Don't send out podcasts with your press releases.
- Include the information on your podcast that is not getting out by other means, such as blogs, radio and trade shows. (Example: an executive's speech from a conference.) Use the medium to build excitement for upcoming events.

Step #6. Don't discard the email list of a past series' subscribers

- Gradually reduce the frequency of podcasts. (Example: if you were doing weekly podcasts, send out monthly ones.)
- Provide content to those subscribers to keep them engaged.

Step #7. Take advantage of already available podcasts

- Examine popular podcasts reaching your community and emulate successful ones.
- Send your information to other podcasters before your show's release. (Hint: combine a short introduction with an interesting sound bite from a show you want to release and a URL where people can access it in entirety.)
- Offer an exclusive to a podcaster who has a popular show that matches your product. Make sure he or she believes in your product; allow the podcaster to shape your message.
- Produce a segment to be embedded in someone else's podcast with a large audience.
- Make sure that whoever represents your brand is truly likable. (Hint: think Katie Couric.)

Step #8. Decide on audio vs video

- A monthly audio podcast is easy to consume – your audience can listen while driving. A video podcast has the benefit of a viral effect; i.e., a water cooler topic.
- Audio is much less expensive to produce. Audio makes the listeners feel like they are part of the conversation.

Step #9. Involve the marketing department

- Promotion insight is necessary.
- Marketers can learn tricks of the trade from outside consultants. Marketers can read up and become experts themselves.

Step #10. Sell sponsorships successfully

- Emphasize great ROI. Let the numbers speak for themselves.
- \$1,300 for inclusion on an audio podcast is worth the investment because of the unique treatment podcasters offer advertisers who receive genuine attention.

See Section 7 for our Podcast checklist.

Posting reviews/comments

You can also implement a system that allows users to post reviews/comments related to your content (or products and services).

Statistics show that people like hearing what other people think and, in turn, making their own opinions known. Eretailers' review and feedback sections have grown by nearly 25% since 2004. In fact, according to MarketingSherpa data, 58% of consumers prefer websites with peer-written product reviews.

An easy way to get users to post reviews or comments is by adding message boards or forums to your site. The goal is to encourage subscribers to form their own online community.

Want to reap the greatest rewards from this strategy? Tie the benefits of community – a more engaged audience, more frequent visits to your website – to an advertising sales strategy.

Sporting News has made an online community and user-generated content a key feature of its free online content. But instead of a MySpace-style free-for-all, Sporting News created a ranking system for its 1 million registered, active users. Fellow members rate each other's comments. Those ratings combine with a user's activity level to earn them a ranking of 1 to 5 stars and the chance to compete for online awards and recognition.

This type of system appeals to members who want to prove their sports knowledge. Perhaps more important, a system that encourages frequent activity and useful comments helps calm advertisers who are squeamish about placing ads next to user-generated content.

Widgets

Widgets, sometimes referred to as gadgets, badges, capsules, gizmos, minis, modules, plug-ins or snippets, are small applications used to meet computer users' specific needs. They offer quick access to Internet sites; desktop utilities, such as to-do lists, calendars, clocks, weather, games, entertainment; and tools, such as system resource monitors or application launchers. Most widgets look like a tiny window on the user's desktop or Web page.

The worldwide widget viewing audience in April 2007 was 177.8 million people (21% penetration of the worldwide online audience). By June 2007, that figure had increased to 239.3 million people (27.9% worldwide penetration).

Amazon.com launched widgets to let customers show off their favorite Amazon products on blogs, websites and social networking pages. USA Today offers online users the ability to install widgets on their blogs and personal Web pages that contain news updates and other information from the newspaper.

Two ways that widgets work for marketers:

- Merchants can deliver offers via images, multimedia and coupons so viewers can click through to the product page and complete the transaction.
- Publishers can stream content to build brand and advertising dollars or increase paid subscriptions.

Specific to publisher sites, widgets that drive content can add value to the brand. Unless you have an extremely faithful audience, however, they also may experience short stays at blogs. For instance, according to exclusive cross-client numbers contributed by service provider Gigya Inc., each installed widget averages around 200 views before being removed from the page.

Two more data points from Gigya:

- The top 15 social network/blog platforms account for 90% of their clients' widget installs.
- They tracked 500 million widget views per month from the hundreds of sites they service.

NOTE: Widget vendors (for content or retail versions) can track all the regular key campaign metrics, such as clickthroughs, page views and sales conversions.

SECTION 2:

HOW CONTENT PUBLISHERS CAN PROFIT FROM WEB 2.0

OK, let's get down to the really important question: How can content publishers make money with Web 2.0? The answer: You can make money from Web 2.0 in one or more of these three ways:

- Advertising
- Using AdSense
- Getting sponsors yourself

ADVERTISING

Most companies who successfully monetize Web 2.0 do it through advertising – from banner ads, targeted ads and sponsorships. When done well, Web 2.0 translates into a boost in the number of page views which, in turn, means greater ad impressions.

You can also profit by higher clickthroughs when links are included and displayed prominently in blogs and other user-generated content.

(That's the direct way to measure profits. You'll also see indirect profit: an impressive site that people find useful or entertaining will help establish your reputation and brand, which can lead to increased business over the long term.)

ADSENSE

Google's AdSense is, perhaps, the best-known advertising program involving Web 2.0 sites. AdSense ads are contextually served, which means Google uses sophisticated technology to automatically examine the content on the Web page and then pick the most-relevant ads to serve next to it.

It's easy to get started with AdSense. First, you sign up with an online form. Then after an editor approves the website you gave them a URL for, you paste a simple line of code onto your Web page. Google starts automatically serving up ads on that spot.

You can decide where on the page the ads will appear and roughly what they'll look like from predetermined template choices. Basic ad blocks contain either two or four text ads. Graphical ads are also available.

Your payment depends on the type of ad, number of clickthroughs and other factors.

7 tips to get the most out of AdSense

Tip #1. Stick with text ads

Anecdotally, the much trumpeted image ads don't get the response rates of text-only ads. And if you're getting a cut of sales based on response rate, that's the end game.

Tip #2. Put the ads as close to your content as possible

Readers click to your page to see the content. Any ad close to or contained within the content generally will do better than anything elsewhere on the page.

Tip #3. Don't rely on standard banner placement or ad sizes

Web surfers have trained themselves to ignore 468x60 ads placed in regular banner-ads-go-here spots. Want more clicks? Move your AdSense ads out of that traditional format. We know publishers who have tested location all over the page (including at the very bottom) with great results.

Tip #4. Test multiple ads

You can stick in multiple ads per page. If this is critical revenue to you and the extra ads won't dilute your brand or hurt user experience, test it.

Tip #5. Consider "white" borders

Classic ads online have lines boxing them off from the other content on the page. You might test a "white" border, which would effectively render the border invisible on a white page. No border means no block to stop the eye.

Tip #6. Match borders to your site colors

Another option: Use a border color that matches your site's palette as closely as possible. The ads look more at home and often get better clicks.

Tip #7. Create content to match most-expensive AdSense clicks

Because AdSense operates as an auction, not all clicks are equal. Some clicks might make you a few cents; others could make you double-digit dollars. We know of entrepreneurs who deliberately check keyword terms that are worth bigger bucks and then write content designed specifically to attract higher-value contextual ads.

This can mean anything from tweaking the specific verbiage in your headline to actually composing articles focused on topics you might not have otherwise written about. This AdSense-driven editorial, instead of reader-driven editorial,

tends to be the most profitable for publishers extremely adept at getting free search engine traffic from SEO.

Getting sponsors yourself

Of course, you could always eliminate the middleman and contact potential advertisers yourself, asking them to sponsor your blog or other Web 2.0 site. This can be a tiring and time-consuming process and would require you to use staff that could probably be put to better use for other tasks.

Subscription fees

You can also make money with subscription or membership fees. This can be tough if you are launching a new site or unveiling new content that isn't well-known. Unless you can generate some advance "buzz," people will hesitate to pay a fee to subscribe to an unknown and unproven service.

Plus, it can be tough to get people to start paying for blogs and user-generated content. This is, after all, content they're accustomed to getting for free all over the Internet.

It's much easier to add Web 2.0 features to an existing (more traditional) subscription service that people already pay for – even if you need to bump up the price slightly.

Tips for a successful paid content site

Many online content sites are ad-supported and, therefore, free to users. How can a paid site compete with that? Here are a few points to keep in mind:

Insight #1. Readers are willing to pay for content related to high-risk, high-cost activities

Their willingness to pay for information correlates with the risk of the decision they're making. Many readers are more than willing to pay for advice that can help them avoid problems with things like credit or legal issues. Bottom line: The more that's at risk, the more they will pay to lessen the risk.

Insight #2. Relevancy is a key driver for subscription purchases

Content providers are adopting several tactics to deal with the demand for relevancy:

- How-to or practical content that helps subscribers perform specific tasks. This includes tool kits, document templates and checklists that add value to a subscription.

- Content based on an individual subscriber's role within a company.

This is an especially important tactic for companies with huge databases of aggregated information. They can carve out niches from those databases aimed at specific job descriptions or types of information. For example, Factiva offers content aimed at compliance officers, credit risk managers, executive search consultants and marketing, sales and PR professionals.

Insight #3. Customers want new packaging and pricing models

Content trends are pushing publishers toward more bite-sized information, delivered with greater frequency. At the same time, business customers still want analysis and context around their information – they just want it more frequently. If you're putting out market reports once a year, that frequency isn't fast enough.

In addition to research reports, monthly or weekly publications, email newsletters and other regular content, publishers need to consider:

- Real-time data services, such as Onvia's automatic updates of government RFP and bid information
- Customizable information interfaces, such as dashboards that allow clients to monitor a range of information and data
- Social networking or other peer-to-peer interaction that allows subscribers to share information with each other however and whenever they want

Insight #4. Customers want data-centric content

The noise from opinion-based content grows online. So, content with an underpinning of real data is becoming increasingly valuable. People want more facts, and they're willing to pay for them.

Here are a few examples of data-centric products:

- Reed Construction Data packs construction industry information into products ranging from lead services, to market outlooks, to buildings products cost databases.
- Hearst Business Media has specialties such as automotive data, with its Black Books, MOTOR Information Systems and Used Car Guides.
- IMS Health's subscription-based PharmaQuery service is built around international pharmaceutical pricing and regulatory data.

Publishers who don't have a data network of their own can partner to create data-driven products. CIO Magazine and the American Productivity and Quality Center, for example, are partnering on an IT best practices benchmarking project that benefits both companies.

Insight #5. Audience measurement is crucial

Publishers who have the best handle on where potential subscribers are purchasing information and how they're consuming it will have a better chance of staying on top of rapid changes in industry trends.

Publishers must stay on top of their own metrics and keep an eye on how new products or services are faring to help gauge how well they're responding to industry trends and audience shifts.

Fee vs. free

Discussions that revolve around Web 2.0 features and content must, of course, address the issue of providing content for free or charging a fee. This hotly debated topic has advocates on both sides of the argument.

SherpaTip: Pay attention to what your competitors do ... and what they don't do. If nobody else is doing blogs or giving away "teaser" content, perhaps you should consider being the first.

Many companies – including some very large corporations – are foregoing subscription fees to make their content accessible to anyone who wants it. They expect to recoup those fees through advertising dollars or other revenue. Then there are companies whose bread and butter are subscription fees. They feel that their content is a valuable commodity that shouldn't be given away for nothing.

Your own situation should govern your decision. You may also want to consider the "freemium" approach: You provide free access to some material while keeping other services behind a fee-charging wall.

Pay-as-you-go fees

Rather than charging a flat subscription fee, you can also charge users a per-item fee to access your content. Offer video, tutorials and classes available for download at a fee. This can result in a higher ROI rate. After making the single investment to create the material, you can sell it again and again – as many times as you want. Some or all of these videos or content can be supplied by users to reduce or cut your expenses.

Another option: Use a free/inexpensive teleseminar service to conduct a seminar, then host it on your site and charge a fee for downloads; it has the potential for a big profit margin. MediaBistro (<http://www.mediabistro.com>)

employs this strategy: They “hire” users as instructors, then buy all rights for their materials and re-use them again and again for future classes.

Indirect revenue

Many companies use Web 2.0 features to drive traffic to their sites or promote sales of existing products. This is the thinking behind a recent move by Paramount Pictures, which launched a Facebook application allowing users to watch clips from thousands of movies on the site. The hope is that once users watch the clip, they’ll be more inclined to buy the DVD.

Authors often use this approach – they post blogs, participate in podcasts or webinars, spend time on Facebook/MySpace or even give away free excerpts from their books simply to attract visitors.

SECTION 3: GETTING STARTED

You know you want – and need – to get with the Web 2.0 movement. But you're scared it will be too challenging or too time-consuming. Here are five easy steps to help get you started:

1. **Choose your target(s).** Decide where to allow user interaction and what types of contributions complement your content. Look for areas that already generate feedback or user comments; these areas would probably easily attract user interaction. Keep track of which articles or items are forwarded or tagged by users most often. Tip: simple poll or ratings features – those that allow readers to give articles a simple “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” – tend to be popular with readers.
2. **Start small.** Run a beta launch of your approach by recruiting a select group of users to test the new features and contribute. You want to pick users who can be trusted to post intelligent, ethical and valuable comments and insights. These initial contributors will make your first impression to visitors and will also set the tone for future contributors. It would be very helpful if your initial contributors are well-known and/or have lots of contacts; they can bring in lots of new visitors to check out the material.
3. **Make your guidelines short and simple.** You will need rules, but keep them simple. If the rules are wordy or complicated, nobody will read them. Keep them basic and as non-technical as possible. Things like “No profanity” or “Only upload content you own (or have rights to)” work well.
4. **Appoint a manager/moderator (or several).** This staff member must enforce the rules and put out fires that crop up; they should be more than a hall monitor. They should interact in a friendly way with users and other contributors. They can help set the tone and provide the “voice” of the site. They should also provide any important news updates and announce upcoming happenings.
5. **Embrace technology.** High-tech helpers may seem intimidating, but they can come in really handy when you are first branching out into the Web 2.0 world. Filters and buttons or links that help users flag spam or offensive posts can help your manager keep things under control. You can also look into programs and apps that are designed to help you set up blogs, message boards and other interactive features quickly and easily.

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR WEB 2.0 MATERIAL

Now that you've decided to embrace Web 2.0 tactics, you need to come up with some content:

Who will write it?

Your first question: Who will provide it? If it's user-generated content, the answer is obvious. But many companies also have executives and other staffers writing blogs on the company site. Or you can hire outside bloggers. There are blogging companies that act as a syndication service – you pay a fee and you get recurring posts from one or more bloggers, which you can post on your site. The down side, of course, is that this isn't exclusive content – it will appear on other sites.

Where will you place it?

After you decide to add Web 2.0 elements, you need to figure out exactly where you will put them. This will depend in large part on what exactly you intend to offer.

A relatively simple no-frills blog can easily be hosted on your own site. When you start adding elements like video clips, you'll start gobbling up space and bandwidth, which may strain your online capabilities (and cause your hosting expenses to soar). Before you add lots of bells and whistles – or encourage many visitors to check out your site – be sure your server can handle the increased demands.

Another option is to host your blog on a site like Blogger and simply link to it from your “main” site.

Getting into more advanced Web 2.0 features like hosting video clips or sound bites makes it more of an undertaking. The ROI may be worth it, but it will involve more expense on your part while placing more demands on your technical resources.

5 STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

Topix was ranked as a Top 20 online news destination by comScore in November 2007. It links news from 50,000 sources to 360,000 lively user-generated forums. The news site routinely gets 100,000 posts a day.

Here are five strategies from Topix on building an online community.

Strategy #1: Fences Make Better Neighbors

Have standards and publicize them for all to see. A solid Terms of Service policy is your friend.

Strategy #2: Where's the Milk?

There is a reason grocery stores put the milk in the back of the store. When organizing your site and building your community, figure out what should be at the back of your store.

Community sites are everywhere and new sites are sprouting up literally every day. People need a good reason to come to your site. Your community makes up the rest of your store. You need to entice users to stick around and spend time and energy in your online community.

Strategy #3: Humanity Breeds Humility

Offer your users the tools they need to feel invested in your community. Try avatars, profiles, post counts or power-user privileges and status. When users can put more of themselves into your site and see human touches in fellow users, the entire tone of their interactions changes.

Strategy #4: Commit to the Conversation

Divorce yourself emotionally from the content you will see. If your community deals with issues that people are passionate about, you will deal with content that pushes every conceivable button. In short, commit to the conversation. Understand and make it clear to your users that an opposing view isn't offensive just because they don't agree with it.

Strategy #5: It's Nothing Personal

Don't take anything personally. You will never make everyone happy all the time. Just do what you feel is best for your community as a whole. Every. Single. Time.

5 TIPS FOR STARTING A WEB 2.0 SITE

Here are five tips for marketers getting started with Web 2.0:

1. Don't assume that if you build it, they will come. Plan your marketing campaign along with the build-out of your site.
2. Play nice with others. Explore business-development deals for your space with sites that are further along than yours.
3. Always keep your ear to the ground for new technologies that can enhance your site.
4. Factor in portability of content. Empower your users through RSS, embeds and other *share functionalities*.
5. Even if you don't consider your site to be a social network, your users might.

So, offer ways to share information and opinions with each other.

Case Study: How ESPN Added Web 2.0 to Boost Paid Subscriber Rates

Here's a challenge many online publishers face: With so many free sources of content out there, how do you get people to pay for your content? ESPN.com employed some Web 2.0 tactics to solve this problem. Their marketing team doubled the number of subscribers willing to pay \$39.95 a year or \$6.95 a month to access the 'Insider' content.

Strategy #1. Clearly define premium content

Potential subscribers have to know exactly what kind of content to expect from the premium label and what makes it different from free offerings on a site. Yet, premium content on ESPN's site was still amorphous. From the user's perspective, it wasn't clear what content was going to be premium.

To address this issue, the ESPN.com team first defined internally what they wanted the premium product to include. They decided to focus on analysis – content different from the sports news, statistics or features available for free at ESPN.com and at countless competitors around the Web. Analytical content included:

- Expert analysis of recent sports news, games, trends
- Predictive analysis of what's going to happen with important future events, such as playoffs and sports drafts
- Analysis of player statistics and other fantasy sports league essentials

Any ESPN news story, feature article or general commentary piece would remain free, public content.

Strategy #2. Integrate premium content with free stories site-wide

The ESPN.com team placed premium stories in the context of related free stories. They wanted to make sure site users saw the range of content and were tempted to click for deeper breakdown of the news. (Premium articles are marked with an icon.)

Previously, only some premium content was integrated throughout the site; Insider stories were primarily set aside in a special block on the home page. If readers weren't Insider subscribers, thus, they tended to ignore the special Insider section.

To entice more readers to buy content, ESPN.com viewed their integrated approach like point-of-purchase marketing. Users reading a free story might want

some in-depth analysis to go with it. The editorial team still will lead with the best stories of the day on the homepage – free or pay. Typically, about 10% of the stories on the homepage are Insider-only.

Strategy #3. Capitalize on special events

Having a clear focus for premium content can allow you to take advantage of special events or other external conditions that boost users' interest in those stories. For ESPN Insider, the focus on analytical content matches well with a handful of key sporting events each year. That's when the demand for in-depth analysis seems greater among hard-core sports fans.

Here are some techniques they use to make the most of the opportunity:

- **Get a long head start.** ESPN's writers start covering drafts or trading deadlines months before the event. For example, the site's premium coverage of the NFL draft started eight months earlier. Premium stories and special reports, such as mock drafts, will continue throughout the season, intensifying in the weeks leading up to the event.
- **Aggressive marketing within the site.** Besides placing Insider draft or trade analysis next to free news stories, the team also uses internal banner ads that steer fans toward the premium content. Ads will play up the long lead time ("Don't wait until April to start analyzing the NFL draft") and the expert opinion featured in Insider stories.
- **Use offline media to push online subscriptions.** With television, radio and a print magazine under the ESPN brand, the team has Insider writers who analyze the NFL draft appear regularly on the network's television and radio shows.

Thanks to those techniques, 60% of ESPN Insider's new subscriptions occur around major events on the sports calendar.

Strategy #4. Capitalize on big names and loyal audiences

The marketing team relies on a handful of unique brands within the ESPN.com universe that attract a rabid following to help boost Insider membership.

Fantasy sports are a big part of the site's premium audience. Having unique features within Insider, like Scouts Inc. – a team of analysts made up of former professional and college scouts that ESPN acquired a year ago – helps drag existing loyal audiences into the subscriber fold. Now, fantasy sports users spend more than 350% more time on ESPN.com than the typical adult.

The company didn't want some of ESPN's best-known writers accessible only to subscribers. They wanted their popularity to draw readers to the free,

advertising-supported portions of the site as well. But the ESPN.com team did want their top writers to create unique Insider content for subscribers only. So, they asked them to write blogs. ESPN Insider now features 35 premium blogs, which accounted for 25% of all subscriptions in the past year.

Strategy #5. Upgrade the premium mix to retain subscribers

Sites need to consider what types of premium content are going to pull in subscribers right away and retain them year after year. For ESPN.com, this means continually adding to ESPN Insider's features and content mix.

The challenge, though, is that a site can't just take something that used to be free and make it part of a premium offering. This could alienate both free users, who are having something taken away from them, and premium subscribers, who may feel like their subscriptions are being watered down.

One of ESPN's approaches is acquiring popular sports properties from across the Web. For example, in addition to Sports Inc., ESPN Insider also added the fantasy sports site The Talented Mr. Roto to the mix.

SECTION 4:

SOCIAL NETWORKING – THE BASICS

Are you paying attention to social networking sites? Do you see them as valuable opportunities they can add to your marketing campaigns? Then you are looking at online gold mines.

What exactly is social networking?

Social networking is a term commonly used to refer to online sites that allow people to connect with one another. You can meet others with similar backgrounds, interests and occupations and share updates about your lives (along with photos, videos, etc.).

Popular social networking sites

The most popular and well-known social networking sites include MySpace and Facebook. For business and professional networking, there are LinkedIn, Naymz and Ryze, among many others. Then, there are sites like MeetUp, where users arrange “meet-ups” – networking parties organized and promoted online.

Just how popular are they?

By now, pretty much everyone is at least somewhat familiar with Facebook and MySpace. Many people still mistakenly think, however, that those sites are useful only to teenagers and college students.

Here are some stats to mull over:

- MySpace says that 1 out of every 4 Americans uses the site.
- MySpace had more than 60 million visitors in December 2007, according to Nielsen Online.
- Google’s Blogger (the most popular blog site) had more than 35 million visitors that same month.
- 66% of Facebook users are ages 18-24, but only 26% of MySpace users are in that age group. Almost a third of MySpace users are 25-34; another 20% fall in the 35-44 age range, according to figures compiled by Yankee Group.

Valuable opportunities abound

Maybe you have already realized the networking advantages of using these sites to build business relationships and make new contacts. But to savvy marketers who know how to capitalize on the opportunities, the value of social networking sites involves much more than bulking up your Rolodex (to use the appropriate lingo, adding names and avatars to your “friends list”).

For example, social networking sites have been kind to quite a few musical groups, who developed fan followings. These bands eventually landed record deals through MySpace word of mouth.

Then there are entrepreneurs who have created businesses based on networking sites. They have created Facebook widgets and apps, for example, or designs for MySpace pages.

Advertising gold mines

Companies that advertise on social networking sites can reap big rewards. Consider this: On MySpace alone, there was more than \$500 million in ad revenue in 2007.

FYI: A banner ad on MySpace goes for about half the price of a similar ad on Facebook.

Other sites

Along the same lines as social networking sites are social media sites. These include Digg, which allows people to spotlight interesting news stories.

There are also photo sharing sites like Flickr, which allows users to show their photos to friends and strangers.

YouTube rules the roost for video sharing.

Make the most of your social networking pages

- It's not enough just to slap together a MySpace page and call it a day. You need to call attention to your page and do everything you can to drive visitors to it. Then you need to keep them interested.
- Interact with visitors, preferably through a high-profile figure from your company or industry.
- Add well-known, interesting or popular people to your "friends" list.
- Include entertaining elements like video clips or sound effects.

Tips for getting the most out of social media sites

Give bloggers an advance look at your site, service or product. They will love having the "inside scoop" and will be more likely to spread the word.

Use podcasts selectively and choose the content carefully. While some user groups are familiar with podcasts, many others may be unfamiliar or leery of this

format. Gauge your target group's comfort level with podcasts and then keep the content as tightly focused as possible.

Use your network as an informal focus group. After you have amassed a lot of "friends," you can use them to give you immediate (and generally unedited) feedback – at little or no cost.

Word of warning

One thing to keep in mind: social networking sites can be magnets for controversy. Many of these sites have been criticized for not doing enough to protect underage users from falling prey to pedophiles and scam artists. As a result, these sites frequently reevaluate and revise their privacy policies, as well as the access and settings controls for underage users.

They've also been criticized for releasing users' private information. Generally, this has been done to help advertisers target specific demographics.

SECTION 5: METRICS & MEASUREMENTS

It's not always easy to gauge the effectiveness of your Web 2.0 tactics. Measuring the success of a social networking campaign, for example, is much tougher than traditional metrics – like simply tracking the number of people who click on a hotlink. Testing and evaluation methods are still evolving – with benchmarks and metrics still, in many ways, a work in progress.

There are some ways for you to judge the effectiveness of your campaigns, though. For example, here are some ways to judge a blog's success:

- Traffic (keep in mind that blog stats tend to be quirky; one popular post can skew a blog's overall traffic numbers.)
- RSS feeds
- Inbound hotlinks
- Search position (by keywords related to your brand)

Stats that can gauge the success of other forms of social media include:

- Number of posts
- Percentage of members/users who actually contribute
- Page views
- Clickthroughs

There are also sites and services that specialize in tracking and compiling Web 2.0-related stats. For example, VidMetrix (<http://www.vidmetrix.com>) will track your video's stats on YouTube and more than 50 other sites.

Scott Fox is author of 'Internet Riches.' He offers a free email newsletter of online marketing strategy and tips on his website <http://www.ScottFox.com>. Here are his tips for online publishers hoping to profit from Web 2.0:

- Start by examining the potential benefit to your customers. Will your audience benefit from increased interactivity between members? Most businesses will say, "Yes," but others aren't ready for their customers to meet one another.
- Look at what your competitors are doing. Introducing updated Web 2.0 features to your site could help you leap-frog competition.
- Will your audience use Web 2.0 features? Investing in a redesign or new features for an audience that won't or doesn't know how to use them will hurt your ROI.

Final advice on getting started

Blogs can be cheap to implement and are a good place to start. They can generate revenue by encouraging product sales and advertising (more on this in Section 6).

Social networking can also be inexpensive. To encourage your audience to comment on your blog, for instance, you may want to set up a Facebook group or a free customized social network on Ning to experiment. Then, invite your customers to these interactive sites to see if they enjoy the tools before investing in customized or enterprise-grade solutions.

When you decide to invest real money or time into Web 2.0, you'll want to watch your costs and calculate some estimated lifetime value with customer metrics. You can use these to determine whether your investment can be recouped through advertising revenue or whether you may need to create a paid membership or subscription-based offering for users interested in the additional features.

Encouraging interaction with your brand is a top goal of any marketer. For online publishers and content providers faced with almost infinite competition, extending your brand with interactive Web 2.0-type environments may be a differentiator. It can provide credibility and reinforce your brand with users.

Content providers can also gain an advantage over ecommerce businesses because they have a constant stream of new material for their audience. Clever use of this content with a Web 2.0 forum can encourage repeat visits and interaction with your brand.

SECTION 6:

WEB 2.0 ADVERTISING

One obvious way to capitalize on the popularity of social networking sites is to advertise on them. There are two ways to do this:

#1: DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE SITE(S)

The major sites, like MySpace and Facebook, have divisions solely devoted to helping businesses advertise on the site.

Advantages:

- These sites maintain comprehensive records of their users' demographics, tastes, habits, preferences and other traits. This allows you to pinpoint exactly which users you want to target.
- You can target people who have talked about your site/business or friends of those people.
- The ads look natural and organic, like they belong on the page. For example, Facebook offers Social Ads, which are displayed in the area of the page where users communicate with friends, and are often accompanied by social conversation or relevant stories.
- You can get detailed stats, including demographic data of those who are viewing and reacting to your ads. You can start accessing these metrics immediately (usually within an hour or so) after your ad goes "live."
- It's easy. Facebook and MySpace have set up systems that make it simple to get your ads up and running quickly.
- Payment is relatively affordable (though numbers vary depending upon type of ad, target demographics and other factors).

What does it cost?

There is no menu of ad prices when it comes to social networking sites. You can't estimate your cost until you figure out exactly what you want, who you want to target and how many ads you want to buy.

You buy ads on either a cost-per-click or cost-per-impression basis. Here is Facebook's explanation for how they figure out your cost:

“For any given ad unit, we select the best ad to run based on the cost per click or cost per thousand impressions and ad performance. We have a process in place that will automatically calculate the minimum price that the advertiser could pay and still have the highest cost per click or CPM ad, and the advertiser will only be billed that price. This price may be below the advertiser’s maximum cost per click or CPM. Because we lower the cost per click or CPM on your behalf, we recommend that you enter your true maximum cost per click or CPM when creating an ad. This will increase the likelihood that you do not miss out on clicks or impressions that you otherwise could have received.”

Translation: Facebook figures out what they estimate your ad is worth and then gives you a price. If it turns out that you get fewer clicks than they anticipated, they’ll adjust your price.

You can set your budget limits in advance, so you don’t end up with any nasty billing surprises.

#2: GO THROUGH AN AD SERVICE

You can also use a service that specializes in placing ads on social networking sites:

AdWords

Google’s AdWords is, perhaps, the best known of these services.

AdSense vs. AdWords

Before we go any further, we should probably clarify the difference between AdSense and AdWords. They’re closely related (and both are run by Google), so it can get a bit confusing. But it’s really pretty simple to explain the difference. AdSense is a program where Google places ads on your site. With AdWords, you place ads on other sites.

Or:

AdSense = Google pays you. AdWords = You pay Google.

How it works

You buy ads via AdWords similar to dealing directly with the social networking sites (except, of course, you have your choices of sites to pick from). Your ads can contain text, images or click-to-play videos.

Once again, your choices are cost-per-impression (CPM) and cost-per-click (CPC) pricing. Which to choose?

Here is some advice from Google AdWords: “If the purpose of your placement-targeted campaign is to increase sales, leads, sign-ups or other conversion-oriented metrics, you can select CPC bidding and pay when users click on your ads. If you want to maximize impressions and increase brand awareness among your target audience, you can select CPM bidding.”

You can set your buying limit in advance, which helps you stick to your budget. With services like Google AdWords, you submit a bid – an amount you are willing to pay either on a per-click or per-thousand-impressions basis. (This is in addition to the initial one-time activation fee.)

How do you determine what to bid? It depends on your keyword(s). AdWords ranks keywords and then uses that score to determine the minimum amount you must bid for your ad to show.

Because of the variables involved in this pricing formula, it can be tricky to plan an exact budget until you select your keywords and run them through the AdWords system. However, AdWords allows you to set a limit on how much you will spend per day and per ad campaign.

The pricing for a content page may differ from the price for the same ad on a search page. Google will monitor the stats, and if their data shows that clicks on a content page are less likely to turn into actionable business results, they reduce the price you pay for that click.

SherpaTip: Use conversion tracking to help figure out how likely it is that a click will result in a sale. You can also use site analytics to see how much traffic your blog or social networking page is getting.

If you want to avoid the risk that your ad will end up on a page containing controversial content, you can choose the option of placing ads on the social networking site – but on pages that don’t feature user-generated content (for example, pages featuring news round-ups).

The AdWords placement tool will help you select the specific sites and types of pages where your ads will appear.

Word of warning

Before using any type of blogging or social networking site, be sure to read the terms of service closely to avoid inadvertently violating any rules. For example, MySpace rules prohibit users from installing any type of “ad blocking” code or otherwise doing anything to interfere with the transmission of ads on the site.

To Download: <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/tk/Web20PodcastChecklist.pdf>



- ☐ Identify goals
- ☐ Pinpoint target listener
- ☐ Select participant(s)
- ☐ Select presentation style (lecture, talk show chat, interview, etc.)
- ☐ Choose vendor(s) and/or technical staff
- ☐ Test microphone/recording equipment
- ☐ Download audio editing/recording software

- ☐ Record audio
- ☐ Add music and/or sound effects
- ☐ Edit mixed audio
- ☐ Save master file in WAV format
- ☐ Save a version in MP3 format (make sure file has an .mp3 extension)
- ☐ Upload/publish MP3 file
- ☐ Test files on several MP3 players
- ☐ Make sure sound is easy to hear

- ☐ Select RSS creator and/or feed generator, if needed
- ☐ Create RSS feeds
- ☐ Publicize podcast
- ☐ Track stats and feedback
- ☐ Plan next podcast

[illegible]

CHECKLIST: BLOG LAUNCH

To Download: <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/tk/Web20BlogChecklist.pdf>

BEFORE YOU LAUNCH

- ☐ Pinpoint goals
- ☐ Identify target reader
- ☐ Identify content type/format
- ☐ Public or restricted access?
- ☐ Decide on frequency of posts
- ☐ Select author(s)
- ☐ Choose source(s) of revenue: ads, sponsors, subscriptions
- ☐ Calculate expenses, if any
- ☐ Assign staff member(s) responsible to upload/maintain blog

NOTES:

PROVIDER-RELATED TASKS

- ☐ Select a service provider
- ☐ Get familiar with provider's rules and policies
- ☐ Learn provider's system for uploading content
- ☐ Select blog template from provider's inventory

LAUNCHING YOUR BLOG

- ☐ Select launch date
- ☐ Announce upcoming launch
- ☐ Create sample post
- ☐ Insert coding/links for ads or sponsors
- ☐ Add video/audio, if desired
- ☐ Conduct survey or test run, if desired
- ☐ Upload first post(s)

AFTER THE LAUNCH

- ☐ Address bugs or snags
- ☐ Encourage comments
- ☐ Add comments to other blogs, including link to your blog
- ☐ Respond to comments, if necessary
- ☐ Add new posts frequently
- ☐ Monitor stats, if possible

CHECKLIST: PODCASTS - YOUTUBE VIDEO CONTENT



To Download: <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/tk/Web20YTChecklist.pdf>

PREPARATIONS

- ☐ Outline goals
- ☐ Establish guidelines/limits
- ☐ Select participant(s)
- ☐ Review YouTube policies and rules
- ☐ Acquire/prepare necessary equipment (recording device, computer, etc.)

NOTES:

MAKING THE VIDEO

- ☐ Choose background/setting appropriate for content and message
- ☐ Develop content and message
- ☐ Record video in highest-quality format possible
- ☐ Keep video short (ideally, under a minute)
- ☐ Add viewer-catching headline
- ☐ Compare different formats

AFTER THE VIDEO IS DONE

- ☐ Upload video
- ☐ Test several different versions on a limited basis
- ☐ Select thumbnail shot carefully
- ☐ Monitor feedback and discuss results
- ☐ Implement changes based on feedback
- ☐ Track stats
- ☐ Distribute announcement/press release about video
- ☐ Post links to video on company site, social networking pages, etc.
- ☐ Contact appropriate blogs and ask them to post clip
- ☐ Add new videos regularly

CHEAT SHEET: BLOGGING

A blog is, perhaps, the most common Web 2.0 tactic used by online content providers (and businesses in general) today. It's also one of these easiest to get up and running.

Here are the steps involved:

1. Choose Your Provider

You have several options: TypePad, Blogger, Blogspot and WordPress are among the most popular. The good news: Many of them are free or low-cost. (TypePad, for instance, offers a free 14-day trial. Plans start at \$4.95/month. But you can display your own advertising to help recoup those costs.)

For a simple blog, any of these providers would do just fine. If you want to add extras – or want more options for templates, widgets and other elements – do a little research and comparison shop to see which provider best meets your needs. Browse through some sample blogs on each provider's site to get a feel for their available options and designs.

Note: Blogger is now a part of Google. So, Blogger users have access to the array of tools and widgets that Google offers.

2. Choose Your Design

After picking a provider, you need to figure out your design. Browse the templates offered by your blog host. You can usually customize the templates to some extent (this varies from one provider to another). Don't worry – you aren't "married" to this design. If you grow tired of one template, you can easily change to another later on.

3. Publish Your Posts

You enter your post either by typing directly into the text box or copying from your text editing program. And then hitting the "publish" button.

4. Technical Skills Not Necessary

If you're using a blog site like Blogger, you don't need advanced tech skills. The process is designed to be simple enough for the novice. The major blogging providers use a drag-and-drop system. It allows you easily place and move blog elements.

5. Control Your Access

Your control settings will allow you to decide who can contribute to and read your blog. Many publishers and other companies have blogs with several authors who take turns contributing postings.

6. Monitor Your Stats

It's easy to monitor your traffic – most blogging services offer stat counters, or you can add one of your own.

7. Make Your Domain Easy to Remember

If you use a service such as Blogger to host your blog, the URL will probably be something like `yourblog.blogger.com`. But you can just register an easy-to-remember domain (like `ourcompanyblog.com`) and “point” it to your longer blog URL.

8. Check Your Settings

Depending on which service you use to create/host your blog, you may have the option of selecting whether to make your blog public and visible to search engines or keep it private and “invisible.” Generally, you want it to be public and easy for people to find.

9. Add Tools and Toys

There are lots of widgets, buttons and other fun elements you can add to your blog. Try a few things at a time, gauging visitors' reactions and making adjustments as needed.

Among the most popular blog tools and widgets are:

- Detailed stat tools like the widget offered by Feedjit (feedjit.com) which records – and displays in real time - the arrival and departure time of each visitor to your blog.
- LineBuzz (linebuzz.com) is a tool that lets readers add inline comments to your blog.
- Communication tools such as 3Jam and Jaxtr, which let users contact you via your mobile phone while keeping your number private.
- Link monitors like WhoLinked, which keeps track of who has linked to your blog recently.

CHEAT SHEET: USER-GENERATED CONTENT

We've covered specific issues related to user-generated content and Web 2.0 in general elsewhere in this toolkit. But for now, here's the important stuff you need to know.

What is User-Generated Content?

As the name implies, user-generated content (UGC) is created by site users – generally people who create outside of professional routines and practices – as opposed to those who create within an institutional or commercial context.

What's In It For Me?

Why bother with UGC? In a word: revenue. The main source of revenue is advertising (broken down into banner ads, targeted ads and sponsorships). When done well, UGC translates into higher page views, which can mean greater ad impressions. You can also profit by higher clickthroughs when links are included and displayed prominently in blogs and other UGC.

You will see indirect profits as well. People tend to like sites that they find exciting – especially if they can take an active role. The more interesting your content – and the more it entices people to participate – the more word-of-mouth advertising you'll get and the better your reputation will be.

When was the last time you went online (or even watched TV) without hearing some mention of a MySpace page, a YouTube video, a blog or something similar?

Consider this:

- 58% of people ages 13-24 create personal content in a typical week (Deloitte's 2007 State of the Media Democracy survey)
- 71% regularly consume UGC (Deloitte)
- More than 33% of respondents in the 61-75 age range regularly consume UGC (Deloitte)
- Eretailers' review and feedback sections have grown by nearly 25% since 2004, (MarketingSherpa research)
- 58% of consumers prefer websites with peer-written product reviews (MarketingSherpa)

- 70% of respondents said they believe that social media – one of the largest segments of UGC, will continue to grow (April 2007 survey of media executives conducted by Accenture)
- Almost no one, 3% of respondents, said they view social media as a fad (Accenture)
- 68% of the respondents said they believe that within three years their businesses will be making money on UGC (Accenture)

Types of UGC:

There are many different forms of UGC. Here are some of the most common:

- Blog: Web journal updated on a regular basis (newest posts appear at the top); they often includes links, photos and embedded video clips
- Wiki: Site that allows users to easily add entries and edit content (also known as collaborative Web authoring), with entries usually arranged in an encyclopedia style
- Podcast: Media file distributed online; downloaded via software that can read RSS or a similar file format
- Discussion board: Online message board (sometimes called forum) that allow users to post questions/comments and respond to existing posts; may or may not be moderated
- Review/rating: Allows users to give feedback on specific products (like the Amazon.com rating system)
- Club/group: Allows people with common interests to discuss specific issues among a smaller group of users
- Video clip: Think YouTube, with the popularity of camera phones giving an increasing number of people the ability to post

Pros and Cons of UGC:

Is there anything out there that doesn't have pros and cons? Consider the benefits and drawbacks of UGC while making your decision.

Benefits:

- You can post a large quantity of varied content quickly and with limited expense.

- You can cover a wide spectrum of topics.
- Users may mention an issue or concern – even better, a solution to a problem – before you realize it may be needed.
- Users will probably explain things in a way that other users can understand – eliminating a problem that can arise when commercial content uses too much jargon.
- Customers can give you feedback (usually in specific detail) on your products 24/7. It's like having a focus group going all the time.
- Users who answer each other's questions can be a win-win for everyone. New users gain knowledge from another user's firsthand experience; experienced users can feel like they're making a valuable contribution.
- You can target advertising more effectively when you attract a large group of people with similar tastes and interests in one place.

Drawbacks:

- You relinquish total control of the content on your site, which can be scary. You never know what someone might post, perhaps something negative or scandalous, about your company, your products, or a third party, which could lead to liability issues.
- Posted information could simply be flat-out wrong. Wikipedia encounters this problem.
- Credibility is always an issue, with biased comments common.
- Copyright issues can spring up unless you require users to agree to a "terms of use" statement before they can register to post anything. Users should give permission for their comments or material to be posted without compensation.
- There is a learning curve involved if you don't have any staff members who are well-versed in UGC issues and technology.
- You may need to spend to upgrade your site/server capabilities to handle the increased traffic.

How to Get Started:

The more technical aspects of getting started are explained in another section of this toolkit. But your options boil down to three choices:

- Go it alone. Host the UGC on a site maintained by you, perhaps using a template you create.
- Use existing resources. Take advantage of sites/suppliers designed specifically for UGC – like Facebook or Yahoo Groups.
- Enlist partners. Team up with sites or services that complement yours, and pool your resources to share content.

Some Final Tips

- Hire experienced moderators. Ideally, use people who have experience with moderating in general, and your product/company in particular.
- Establish some ground rules. Too many rules tend to turn off people quickly. Keep them as basic as possible. Good examples: No selling or promoting products/services. No profanity. No “flaming” (verbal lashing in cyberspace) – observe proper Internet etiquette.
- Tailor the site’s features to users’ technical skills. Are your users comfortable with Web 2.0? Then use more of the sophisticated type of elements you find on Facebook. Keep things simple and easy-to-use for users not quite at that level yet.

CHEAT SHEET: YOUTUBE

Create a YouTube channel to organize your videos. Most video-sharing sites offer free memberships to upload videos. On YouTube, each member's video contributions are organized into "channels," which act as your homepage on the service.

Channel pages include:

- A description of the content creator – in this case, your business.
- A range of communication options, including the ability for users to email you, subscribe to your channel or share videos with friends.
- The channel's history on YouTube, including creation date, total number of videos added and most recent video.
- Hotlinks to all videos uploaded by that member.

Creating a YouTube channel is simple:

- Register as a user with your company's name as your YouTube user name.
- Once registered, you can access the My Account section to change your channel settings to control features, such as allowing user comments.

A few things to keep in mind:

- YouTube brands all embedded video with a YouTube logo, which may distract viewers from your own logo/brand.
- Controversy isn't necessarily bad. A bit of relatively harmless controversy can be an effective way to drive traffic to your video.
- The most popular videos tend to be funny, shocking or sarcastic.
- Choose your tags carefully, as they are an important tool in leading viewers to your video.

LIST OF VENDORS

A look at service providers who can help

AdSense

Online advertising program operated by Google.

<http://www.adsense.com>

AdWords

Online advertising program operated by Google.

<http://www.adwords.com>

Ajax Metrics

Free service that helps you track usage statistics in your Ajax applications. It's a web analytics tool, similar to Google Analytics, but aimed specifically at Ajax and Flash applications.

<http://www.ajaxmetrics.com/>

Azoogles Ads

Online advertising service.

<http://www.azoogleads.com>

Audacity

Free podcasting program that lets you record and edit audio files

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Blogger

Blogging provider that offers many templates and easy-to-use apps.

<http://www.blogger.com>

Clickability

Web Content Management solution enabling non-technical users to create, manage, publish, deliver, measure, and adapt sophisticated Web sites containing Web 2.0 tactics easily and efficiently.

<http://www.clickability.com>

Feedburner

Podcast distribution service.

<http://www.feedburner.com>

Flypaper

Users download Flypaper, free, and instantly have access to thousands of "models" and entire Web-ready presentations that can be downloaded and customized, and then published to YouTube, Facebook or other sites.

<http://www.flypaper.net>

Gigya

Widget distribution service.

<http://www.gigya.com>

iTunes

Podcast distribution and downloads.

<http://www.apple.com/itunes>

Libsyn

Podcast distribution service.

<http://www.libsyn.com>

Ning

Service that allows you to create and share your own social network quickly and easily.

<http://www.ning.com>

Pluck

Marketing firm specializing in social media campaigns.

<http://www.pluck.com>

RapOuts

Creates custom social networking applications for companies automatically. These applications carry their brand, videos, messages and interactions.

<http://www.rapouts.com>

TubeMogul

Uploads to the top video sharing sites, and provides analytics data.

<http://www.tubemogul.com>

TypePad

Blogging provider with easy-to-use interface and lots of templates (blogs are completely customizable). Monthly fees start at \$4.95 (after two-week free trial).

<http://www.typepad.com>

VoloMedia

Podcast tracking and reporting service.

<http://www.volomedia.com>

VidMetrix.com

Video tracking and stat-reporting service.

<http://www.vidmetrix.com>

WordPress

Free blogging site that gives users 3GB of upload space (paid upgrades are available for users who need more space).

<http://www.wordpress.com>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Social Media Sites

Del.icio.us - bookmarking site

<http://Del.icio.us>

Digg - bookmarking site

<http://www.digg.com>

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com>

Flickr - photo sharing site

<http://www.flickr.com>

LinkedIn - business networking site

<http://www.linkedin.com>

MeetUp - networking site where users coordinate in-person meetings

<http://www.meetup.com>

MySpace

<http://www.myspace.com>

Naymz - professional networking site

<http://www.naymz.com>

Ryze - business networking site

<http://www.ryze.com>

Technorati - tracks and ranks websites

<http://technorati.com/>

Topix - online news site featuring many Web 2.0 sources

<http://www.topix.com>

TripAdvisor - travel site featuring user-generated content

<http://www.tripadvisor.com>

Twitter -micro-blogging site

<http://www.twitter.com>

Wikipedia - free content, multilingual encyclopedia written by contributors around the world

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

YouTube - video sharing site

<http://www.youtube.com>

Tips and Tools

Blogger's help tips

Contains lots of good info, including:

- How to publish videos on your blog
- How to publish posts from your cell phone (so you can more easily "live blog" an event)
- How to use templates to customize your blog
<http://help.blogger.com/>

Google's gadget gallery: A collection of gadgets and widgets that you can use on your blog, social networking sites or other pages

<http://code.google.com/apis/visualization/documentation/gadgetgallery.html>

Yahoo! social media tools

http://publisher.yahoo.com/social_media_tools/

Metrics & Measurement

Article: Measuring Effectiveness of Social Media

<http://moblogsmoproblems.blogspot.com/2007/11/measuring-effectiveness-of-social-media.html>

Article: New Metrics of Scholarly Authority

<http://chronicle.com/free/v53/i41/41b00601.htm>

Article: Measurement, ROI and Social Media

<http://conniebensen.com/blog/2007/11/07/measurement-roi-social-media/>

Case Studies & Articles:

Ten Ways to Optimize Your Blog

<http://www.buzzlogic.com/resources/articles/10WaysToOptimize.doc>

Harlequin Romance uses blogs to drive traffic to its site

http://www.buzzlogic.com/solutions/use_cases/usecase_seo-pr_hr.pdf

Five lessons from the SIGGART online campaign

<http://goldgroup.blog.com/2045504/>

Templates

Social Media Press Release Template

<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>

Social Media Newsroom Template

http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smnewsroom_template.pdf

Blog Templates

<http://blogger-templates.blogspot.com/>

MySpace Templates

<http://www.myspacelibrary.com/>

Rachel Happe's social media page (includes a list of metrics)

<http://www.thesocialorganization.com>

Sample: USA Today site using SiteLife social media tools

<http://www.pluck.com/products/sitelifelife-case-study.html>

MarketingYak Podcast:

Listen to Editorial Director Tad Clarke and Senior Reporter Sean Donahue discuss ways that subscription sites have added Web 2.0.

<http://podcast.marketingyak.com/flash/web20/index.html>

(Time: 7:32 minutes)

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- Fame: Awards & Speaking Gigs
- Email Marketing
- ContentBiz: Online Pub. Industry
- Job Classifieds
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- Chart of the Week
- SherpaSearch

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MarketingSherpa also hosts annual Summits. This year's include:

- B-to-B East Coast 2008 Summit – October 5-7, 2008 – Boston, MA
- B-to-B West Coast 2008 Summit – October 26-28, 2008 – San Francisco, CA
- Email Summit '09 – March 15-17, 2009 – Miami, FL
- Selling Online Subscriptions Summit '09 – May 2009, New York City, NY

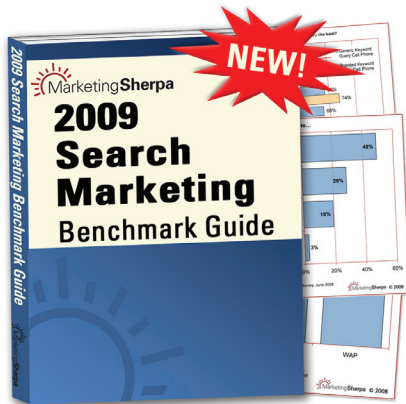
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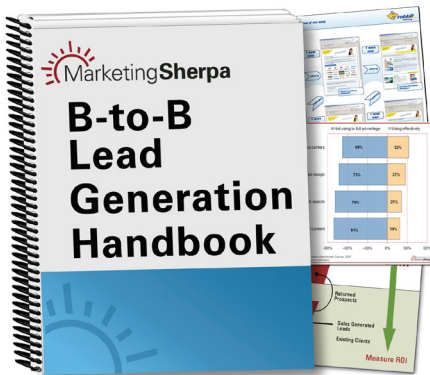
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New Handy Guide gives you: 1,928 marketers surveyed; 170 charts & 45 tables; + 12 eyetracking heatmaps; Growth rates and ROI of search marketing vs. other marketing tactics.

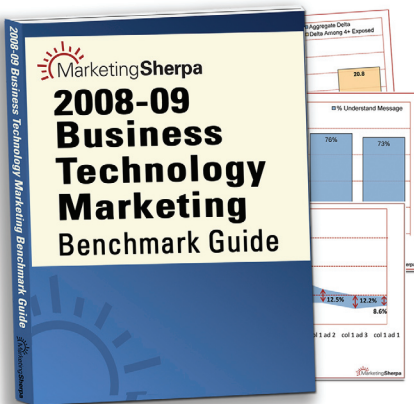
275 pages. Published July 2008 by MarketingSherpa; \$397 for instant PDF download plus printed copy.



MarketingSherpa 2008-09 B-to-B Lead Generation Handbook

Practical instructions to generate, qualify and nurture new business leads. Features dozens of Case Studies and real-life samples you can use to inspire your own demand generation campaigns. Includes proven marketing for high tech, professional services, and manufacturing, via traditional media, the Internet and Web 2.0. Plus bonus tips on how to make the Sales Department your best friends.

531 pages. Published June 2008 by MarketingSherpa; \$497 for instant PDF download plus printed copy!

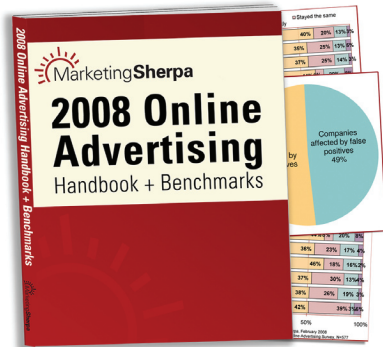


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280 pages. Published May 2008 by MarketingSherpa; \$397 for instant PDF download plus printed copy!

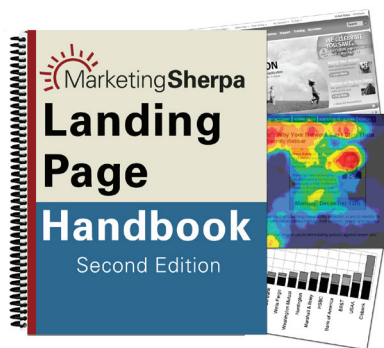
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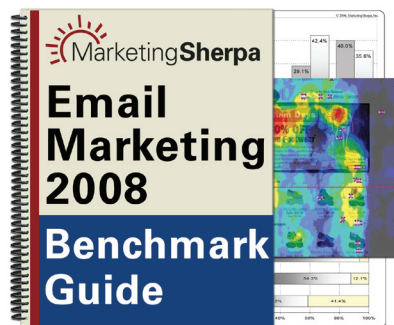
213 pages. Published March 2008 by MarketingSherpa; \$397 for instant PDF download plus printed copy!



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273 pages. Published November 2007 by MarketingSherpa; \$497 for instant PDF download plus printed copy!

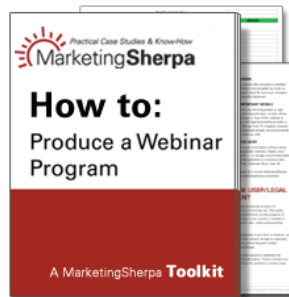
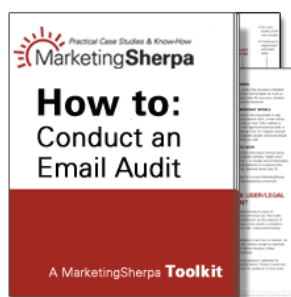


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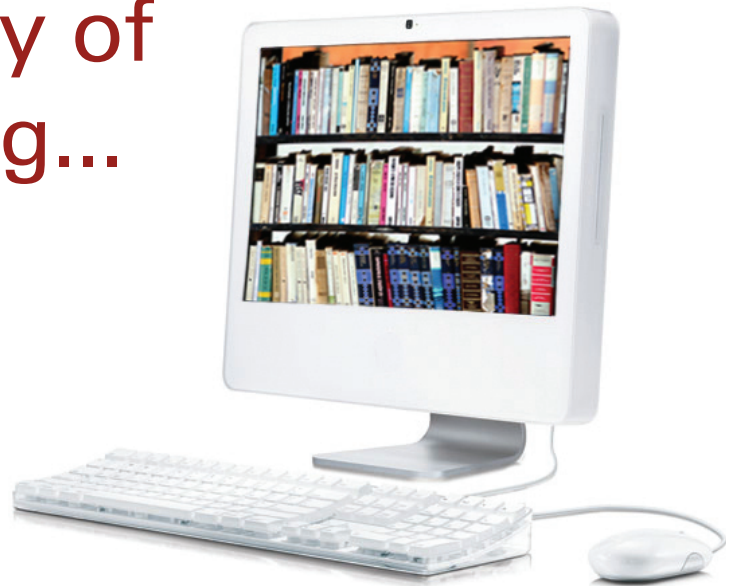
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