



GROWTH HACKING HANDBOOK



100
TACTICS

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What is Growth Hacking?

Growth Hacking is a special category of online marketing.

It is a collection of methods and tactics that are particularly well-suited for small companies and startups looking for early growth.

It is a way of solving common marketing challenges using the tools available to a startup - our agility, our creativity and our knack for technology.

Growth Hacking is **scrappy and smart**. It is about moving the needle for cheap or free. Big companies can throw money at marketing. Your startup cannot. For a Fortune 500, marketing is a *spreadsheet*. For a startup, marketing is a *whiteboard*.

Growth Hacking requires **speed**. It is about quickly testing ideas, often with tech folks and marketing folks working as a tight team. This is easy for startups and difficult for big companies, where getting the mere approval to test an idea can take weeks.

Growth Hacking requires **guts**. Sometimes the tactics are risky. Exploiting a loophole that might be closed at any moment. Flirting with a legal or social boundary. These are things you can only get away with when you are small and unknown.

Some of the tools and tactics we use in Growth Hacking are brand new. Some of them are tried and tested, dating back to the first dotcom boom. We just never had a name for it until now.

We called it *online marketing* or digital marketing, lumping it together with all the stuff that big companies do with their excel sheets and PR agencies and media buys and annual marketing budgets - all of which are largely irrelevant

to us, the small scrappy startup that just wants to get off the ground as cheaply and as fast as possible.

Now we know where to focus.

Growth Hacking is marketing for startups.

Frequently Used Terms

Jargon is kept to a minimum in this book, but here are a few terms that you'll see multiple times.

Product - your product or service. The business that you're building could be a website, app, physical product or a service, but for simplicity's sake I shall use the term *product* throughout the book to refer to any of these things.

Drip Campaign - a type of email marketing where a user subscribes with their email address and is sent a set series of emails over a period of time (for example, one per week on a Monday).

CTA - Call to Action. An instruction given to a user on a website or in an app. For example *Buy Now* or *Sign Up Now*.

SERP - Search Engine Results Page. After typing a query into a search engine, the page of results that a user gets is known as the *SERP*.

How to Use This Book

The tactics in this book are ordered roughly by their simplicity.

In the beginning I introduce *quick wins*. Tactics that are easy to implement, many of them requiring no knowledge of programming. They may not net huge returns, but are the sort of tactic you use because they are easy and over time will have a positive impact on growth.

In the middle I introduce tactics that are more *technical*. Tactics that require editing some code or that take time to implement. More effort, but more potential upside.

Towards the end I introduce tactics that require much *deeper integration*. These will require programming experience - or access to engineering resources - and can take a long time to develop. They are high risk, high potential reward in nature.

I recommend you read all the tactics and then decide which are most relevant to your business. Which ones have the most potential.

Enjoy these 100 growth hacking tactics and may they bear fruit for you and your business.

1. The Email Signature Hack

What is this? Include information at the bottom of all outgoing employee emails about your company such as company name, url and value proposition. Most email clients allow for an email signature of some kind.

Why should I do this? It is an easy way of exposing your company to a growing amount of people. Anyone you send an email to from that point onwards will be exposed to what your company is and does.

Who else is doing this? Most products out of the early growth stage.

How can I implement this? Go to your email client's settings page and tweak the signature. Make sure to include a call-to-action which could be simply your company's url or a link that says "Click for more information".

2. The Twitter Bio Hack

What is this? Add your business @profile to your personal Twitter profile bio. Also get your employees to do the same. For example your bio might be:

I love traveling and spaghetti! I do business development for @company

Why should I do this? @profiles that appear in your twitter bio are clickable. Therefore anyone who checks out your profile also has the opportunity to check out your business profile too - this is traffic that you can then drive to your site.

Who else is doing this? This can be seen on many entrepreneur profiles. Hiten Sha of KISSmetrics for example, includes two of his companies and even his business partner in his Twitter profile bio.

How can I implement this? Simply include your company Twitter @profile in your bio.

3. The SERP Hack

What is this? For any given question that you can type into Google, it is likely that one of the items on the search engine results page (SERP) will be a result from a Q&A site such as Quora or another forum. Ensuring that your product appears on relevant Q&A threads is a way of indirectly appearing on the SERP of Google for that query.

Why should I do this? While it is difficult for early-stage companies to get on the SERP outright, it is easy to contribute to the Q&A page to capture some of the residual search traffic.

Who else is doing this? You can see various examples of this across Quora.

How can I implement this? Perform Google searches for terms or questions that you want to rank for. For example if you are a peer-to-peer marketplace for pet products you might want to target people searching for “how can I sell my pet products online”? From there, find Q&A sites or forums that appear in the first SERP and contribute to the thread in a genuinely useful manner, with a link to your product homepage.

4. The Omnipotence Hack

What is this? Create social profiles for your product, across as many platforms as possible.

Why should I do this? Users expect you to be in the places that they hang out. They will go to Twitter for support, Facebook to see what you're up to, LinkedIn to see who works for you and more. By being in all the places users expect you to be, you create trust but also can drive traffic back to your own site. While it may be difficult to maintain an active profile on all of these platforms, being present is arguably better than being absent.

Who else is doing this? Most companies have at least a Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. But the list can go much longer than just these three especially depending on geography and industry.

How can I implement this? Here's a starter list of places you should consider creating a business profile: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Foursquare. Remember on each one to put a link back to your main site.

5. The Guest Post Hack

What is this? Write a guest post on a popular blog or news site related to your industry.

Why should I do this? Writing a guest post on an established blog with a targeted audience can be an effective way of getting visibility for your startup. Even if you do not get much direct traffic from guest posts, they can help to build your authority in a particular vertical or industry. This can have longer-term benefits such as brand name recognition / association.

Who else is doing this? Most established tech blogs allow guest posts from industry experts especially if the content is timely / interesting / provocative.

How can I implement this? With established tech blogs usually there is someone who looks after guest posts. Pitch them an idea for a post, or even better write it up proactively and pitch it to them. Keep the content informative and interesting - and mention your product only either at the very start or very end. Do not worry about being rejected by the tech blog, since there are many tech blogs out there and you can simply pitch the same idea to another one.

6. The Name Drop Hack

What is this? When writing blog content, reference or mention influential bloggers in your industry then reach out to them after publishing.

Why should I do this? Tapping into an influential individual's network can expose you to a large new audience of potential customers. While it might be difficult to get an influencer to mention you off the bat, your chances are much greater if you involve them in your content somehow. For example, quoting something they wrote and saying whether you agree or disagree. Your quoting them strengthens their position as a thought leader, which is likely a fact they will want to share with their audience e.g. "check out all this content that people are writing about me!".

Who else is doing this? Blog platforms often have a block quote feature that is used for this purpose - to cite other bloggers in the ecosystem.

How can I implement this? Once you have found influential bloggers or twitter users in your industry, always be on the lookout for content by them that you have a strong opinion on. Writing a genuine, interesting counter argument or supporting argument via your blog is one simple way of executing this tactic. You will then need to reach out to them and present your content in some way, for example via a tweet with an @mention.

Notes

This is similar to the Piggyback Hack we discuss later on but the difference here is we look for influential people, regardless of whether their content is trending or not. The Piggyback Hack on the other hand focuses on trending "hot" content.

7. The We Can't Go Back Jack Hack

What is this? On the signup page for your product, disable or remove all navigational elements that would enable a user to go back to the previous page. This includes disabling your site logo, which is often linked to the homepage.

Why should I do this? Preventing a user from backing out of a process is a good enough motivation for some users to complete the process. This can increase your conversion rate on the signup page.

Who else is doing this? Amazon is one of the most famous examples of having a checkout process in which you cannot freely choose to go back to the previous page - the progress arrows at the top are non-clickable and the only obvious options are to progress forward. Groupon and many group-buying sites also remove navigation elements on the signup page.

How can I implement this? Use CSS to hide navigational elements and use Javascript to disable links to other pages on the signup page.

8. The Hashtag All The Things Hack

What is this? Use relevant hashtags in all social media activity.

Why should I do this? Hashtags are a discovery tool. By hashtagging your content you increase the chances of being exposed to new audiences. They also help to add context, for example an ambiguous title for a piece of content can be clarified with a couple of industry-specific hashtags.

Who else is doing this? Anyone working in social media will understand the power of hashtags.

How can I implement this? While you might remember to add hashtags when sharing content on social media, do not forget to pre-fill hashtags when other people share *your* content. Twitter's embeddable tweet button has a feature that allows you to set hashtags whenever anyone shares your content.

9. The Screencast Hack

What is this? For new users, show a video tutorial of how to use your product.

Why should I do this? Some people are explorative learners and are happy to discover the features of your product by themselves. Others are more visual learners and prefer to be led by example. Offering a video of what to do can increase the amount of users who complete your onboarding process and become active users.

Who else is doing this? Sprout Social offers webinars and video tutorials to new users. Zendesk has a fairly complicated onboarding process and makes the experience clearer for the user with video tutorials.

How can I implement this? Keep the video short and concise. If you are not comfortable using your own voice there are products like VoiceBunny where you can hire professional voice actors in a marketplace-style platform.

10. The Survey Hack

What is this? Conduct a survey and share the results.

Why should I do this? Surveys are useful in two ways:

1. The information can be insightful or useful to your industry which establishes you as a thought leader.
2. Participants in the survey may choose to share the results, motivated by their sense of participation in the data.

Who else is doing this? Marketing firms and social media agencies often conduct surveys and share the data. Other companies take a more passive approach. For example OKCupid is a dating site that drove early traffic with a series of data-driven blog posts on the subject of dating. They used the data available to them and were able to answer interesting questions such as “what kind of profile photo gets you more dates?”. This content was widely shared on social media due to its authority (since OKCupid used hundreds of thousands of data points) and insight.

How can I implement this? Conducting a survey is simple with tools like SurveyMonkey. The data can then be shared via a blog post or infographic. The alternative is the OKCupid method where you analyze the data you already have on hand about your user’s behavior and try to extrapolate interesting insights in order to share.

11. The Piggyback Hack

What is this? Find current and influential blog posts on a topic that is relevant to your audience and follow up with a corresponding blog post adding to or enhancing the discussion.

Why should I do this? This tactic is also known as the Skyscraper Technique and was first coined by Brian Dean, founder of Backlinko. A popular piece of content validates the audience for that particular topic. Therefore if you can write something of equal or higher quality extending the discussion, it is likely that you can capture some or all of that audience's attention for yourself. It is a less risky way of deciding what to write than for example, writing on an original topic which you are unsure whether an audience will respond well to.

Who else is doing this? Many bloggers use this tactic as a way of driving traffic when a controversial topic is trending. Try searching blogging platforms such as Wordpress.com or Medium.com for the term “in response to” and you will see current examples.

How can I implement this? Brian Dean outlines the basic strategy as a simple 3-step process to:

1. Find link-worthy content
2. Make something even better
3. Reach out to the right people

Notes

Point (2) is subjective but a tried and tested formula would be to state why the original post is wrong, and what experience or knowledge you have to back that up. Giving a conflicting or alternative perspective on a topic is often more effective as a traffic driver than simply agreeing with it.

12. The My Name is Company Hack

What is this? Whenever you create content anywhere on the web such as writing comments, participating in forums etc, add your business name. For example instead of commenting as *John Smith*, you should comment as *John Smith @ MyCompany.com* which then appears for all other viewers of the content to see.

Why should I do this? It is a simple way of widely distributing the name of your company. Although it cannot drive any direct traffic, it will result in some curious users checking you out.

Who else is doing this? Some people strongly brand themselves as part of their company and this can be seen all over the web. For example look at this popular [quora thread](#) for many examples of user display names incorporating their company name.

How can I implement this? Simply get into the habit of writing *Name @ Company* when entering your username on different social platforms.

13. The Back To Home Hack

What is this? Add a clear link either at the top or bottom of your company blog, linking to the main product homepage.

Why should I do this? One tactic for driving traffic is writing blog content. Maximize your content marketing ROI by ensuring that as many people as possible who see your blog content also click through to the main product homepage.

Who else is doing this? Most products out of the early growth stage.

How can I implement this? Edit the HTML of your blog template to include a link to your main product homepage either at the top or bottom of the page, or both.

Notes

An alternative tactic is to try to capture a user's email address in order to add them to a drip campaign. Since the user came to the blog to consume content, offering them more free content can be a more effective tactic than encouraging users to check out the main product homepage.

14. The Powerpoint Hack

What is this? Convert your best blog posts into powerpoint presentations and upload them to Slideshare.

Why should I do this? Slideshare content gets good visibility on both Google and organically from people browsing Slideshare / embedding the content on their blogs. This means that a good piece of content on Slideshare will get your startup seen by lots of people you otherwise would not have reached. With a clear call to action at the end of your decks pointing users to your site, this can be a way of passively acquiring new users.

Who else is doing this? KISSmetrics has lots of great content on Slideshare, that you will find either via Google searches or see it embedded in various business blogs across the web.

How can I implement this? The simplest form of powerpoint would be to convert any list style blog content you have into a powerpoint presentation with a slide for each list item. Also a good idea is to put a summary slide at the beginning and end. The best form of powerpoint would be a bespoke-designed presentation by someone skilled at designing powerpoints.

Notes

You do not have to spend lots of time converting posts. Remember that the most important factors for powerpoints are the simplicity, ease-of-comprehension and the quality of the content. Good design is a bonus.

15. The Open Graph Image Hack

What is this? When a user shares content on Facebook, special meta tags are used to determine how the content is displayed in a user's feed. These tags determine the specific image for the content that appears on Facebook, the title that gets used, the summary text etc. Use these meta tags to specify a size-optimized photo for Facebook.

Why should I do this? Controlling what image gets shown for your content can increase your click through rate. For example, instead of letting Facebook choose a photo at random which might get cropped, or simply is not very interesting (e.g. a bar graph or a stock image) you can specifically set a size-optimized image that is better representative of your content. The big content blogs even go as far as to create bespoke images with inline graphics such as titles or captions, for maximum effect. Since many users will skim through their Facebook news feed quickly rather than read all the content, an eye-catching visual can get you noticed.

Who else is doing this? BuzzFeed, Viralnova, Upworthy and other heavily social content-driven sites all make use of optimized meta tags for Facebook.

How can I implement this? Facebook has [documentation](#) on how to use these special tags, called Open Graph meta tags. Using them is simply a case of including the right tags in the head of your page.

Notes

To preview how your content will look when posted to Facebook you can use Facebook's open graph content debugging tool, also known as the [Facebook Linter](#).

16. The Power of 9 Hack

What is this? When setting prices, use numbers that end in 9, such as 19, 29, 59 etc.

Why should I do this? The magical effect of the number 9 is a well known psychological phenomenon. A price of \$19 allows a seller to extract almost \$20 of value, but the perceived price to the buyer *feels* much less than \$20.

Who else is doing this? Companies everywhere, both offline and online set their prices using the power of 9.

How can I implement this? As with other pricing tactics this is something you will have to test with customers. Do more people pay at \$19? or \$19.99? or \$20? Only by testing and looking at the data will you know the answer.

Notes

There is an opposing school of thought to this. Some marketers now feel that customers are trained to spot the power of 9-style pricing and that the tactic is no longer effective. A growing trend in the SaaS world is to price with rounder numbers, 20, 30, 50 etc. Salesforce, Basecamp and Wistia are examples of companies who price roundly. Intercom.io and Dropbox are examples of companies who price using the power of 9.

17. The Guarantee Hack

What is this? Offer a “money back guarantee” on your product and display it prominently.

Why should I do this? “Guarantee” is a tried and tested marketing tactic that still applies today. It is a magic word that makes customers feel safer about purchase decisions by removing risk. It is also just general good business practice - if a customer is genuinely dissatisfied, you can create a positive situation out of a negative one by offering a refund.

Who else is doing this? The vast majority of businesses operating today offer some kind of refund policy or money back guarantee. Many ecommerce and software companies also display their refund / guarantee policy prominently at the point of purchase.

How can I implement this? At critical steps in the customer funnel such as the point of purchase, display your money back guarantee promise. For example a badge that states “30 day money back guarantee”.

18. The Price Hike Hack

What is this? Increase the prices of your product.

Why should I do this? It is generally thought that most startups begin life severely underpricing their product. This is often because the product is priced according to what the startup thinks is fair, or priced based on the amount of effort involved in creating it. A better pricing strategy is to price according to value received by the customer. Overall, this can increase top line revenue.

Who else is doing this? Startups are constantly revising their pricing. Get Satisfaction, a customer satisfaction software company, began life with the cheapest pricing at \$29 per month. Now the cheapest pricing is \$1200 per year. Pricing increases like this often represent a pivot into higher ends of the market (for example enterprise as opposed to small business), and/or a better understanding of their target market.

How can I implement this? A useful barometer is to use the 10x pricing methodology. This states that whatever price you are charging you should aim to provide at least 10 times more value to the customer - thus making your solution an attractive alternative to performing the task manually. For example, if your software costs \$50 per month, it should ideally help customers to save \$500 worth of their time per month.

19. The Google Authorship Hack

What is this? When you do a search on Google and see the results page, you will notice that some content has the face of the author next to it. This display is controllable by the publisher, you just have to enable it for your site / content.

Why should I do this? Having a smiling, authoritative face next to content on a Google search result page can lend your content more authority and authenticity than the ones without it. This can help increase organic traffic to your content from Google.

Who else is doing this? Many pro blogs have implemented this feature. There are still many search results on Google SERPs that do not have this feature implemented, meaning anyone who uses this potentially has an advantage in terms of visibility.

How can I implement this? 2 things need to happen for author profile pictures to show up on Google search results. First, the author needs to list your site in their “contributor” section on their Google+ profile page. Second, the author’s Google+ profile page needs to be linked from the content they wrote on your site or blog. This can be achieved through using a meta tag. After implementing these two steps, it will take up to a month for the profile pictures to start appearing in Google SERPs.

Notes

The profile picture that displays will be the Google+ profile picture of the content author. So make sure this photo is appropriate for SERPs to appear alongside your content.

20. The Lottery Hack

What is this? When you have a promotion or a new product, get your twitter followers to tweet about it by incentivizing the tweet with a prize. The prize is then awarded to one retweeter chosen at random after the campaign ends.

Why should I do this? It is a cheap and easy way of spreading news about something. It is also very low-tech - selecting the winner can be an entirely manual process of looking through the retweeter list and choosing someone manually.

How can I implement this? Offering a lottery-style prize is a low-tech method that needs no special software. You will need some kind of campaign page for users to retweet (which advertises your promotion or new product etc) and then an offer.

Notes

The lottery system is perhaps the least engaging way to use social media for promotion. Only one person reaps the benefit, which can discourage people from participating unless the prize is highly valuable.

21. The Chat Show Hack

What is this? Conduct Skype interviews with influential people in your industry and write it up as marketing content for your blog.

Why should I do this? Apart from being a relatively easy way to produce high quality content, you also benefit from the social proof of having the influencer on your site plus potentially some network effect from them sharing the content with their audience. Insightful video interviews can also be a highly shareable form of content, especially with concise bullet-point summaries to go alongside.

Who else is doing this? Mixergy is perhaps the most well-known example of a site that has grown using this formula. The site conducts video interviews with entrepreneurs and then sells that content to other entrepreneurs - but also gives a lot away for free, to encourage sharing.

How can I implement this? Identifying the right influencers is the challenge. Super famous people will likely be too busy to be interviewed, but moderately famous people might have the free time and also the motivation to market themselves more and thus agree to an interview. Look for influencers in your industry on twitter who are actively tweeting original content as a potential indicator.

22. The Twitter Stalker Hack

What is this? Follow potential customers on twitter and / or favorite their tweets.

Why should I do this? This is a simple way of saying “we exist” to a potential customer. It can in some cases lead to them viewing your profile and consequently clicking through to your site. The benefit is that by using twitter’s search tools you can identify potential prospects - for example, people who are complaining about a problem that your company helps to solve.

Who else is doing this? Many startups in their early growth phases, particularly SaaS and location-based platforms.

How can I implement this? Simply search for terms that are relevant to your company and follow potential customers or favorite their tweets. Or follow your competitors followers.

Notes

Some will be tempted to automate this, since manually searching, identifying and following potential influencers is not a scalable tactic. Software does exist that will automate this process but whether you use it is more of an ethical question and not a tactical one.

23. The Hidden Pricing Hack

What is this? Do not show your product pricing up front, until it is clear what the value proposition is. Instead encourage users to try your product for free, before making it clear there is a price for more functionality or to continue using.

Why should I do this? Sometimes a value proposition is best understood by a user trying out your product and reaching some sort of milestone. By letting the user focus on value creation rather than cost, the user can potentially understand the value/cost tradeoff when you do eventually show them the pricing. This can have a positive effect on conversions.

Who else is doing this? In this [survey](#) of over 100 software companies, only 24% were found to display pricing transparently.

How can I implement this? Hiding pricing as an effective growth strategy is not as simple as just removing pricing from the public-facing marketing material. The key is introducing pricing at the right point in the user lifecycle, when they understand the value of your product. For example:

- Just after the user has received a benefit and wants to receive again
- Just before the user is about to receive an expected benefit

24. The As Seen On TV Hack

What is this? Add to your homepage logos of media outlets who have mentioned or written about you.

Why should I do this? This is another form of social proof. Users feel more comfortable using something that other people have already given their seal of approval to. It is a basic quality validation.

Who else is doing this? Many startups proudly display logos of media outlets, sometimes with pull quotes too.

How can I implement this? It can be difficult to get early press in order to be able to say you have been mentioned by media outlets. Remember though that the term “as seen on” does not necessarily have to mean “featured by” and often some poetic license is used when applying this phrase with early stage startups. Arguably, any mention by a media outlet gives you enough of a pretext to use the term “as seen on”. While it is difficult to get featured on popular media outlets it is comparatively easier to, for example:

- Create some great, trending content that gets referenced by a popular media outlet
- Create some controversy that is covered by a popular media outlet
- Guest post on a popular media outlet

25. The Fast Form Hack

What is this? Remove unnecessary form elements on a signup form. For example a signup form that contains a First Name, Last Name, Email and Password can be reduced to simply Email. All other user data can be collected post-registration.

Why should I do this? Forms with many inputs can appear to involve too much effort to fill in, and a percentage of users will simply choose to exit the form and not complete the signup. By reducing the effort required to sign up, you can increase the signup page conversion rate. Arguably, the most important piece of user data to collect is the email address. At a bare minimum, even if a user decides never to use your product you at least have a 2nd chance to market it to them via email (e.g. a drip campaign) before they unsubscribe from your emails.

How can I implement this? Remove unnecessary fields in the HTML and at the database / model level remove the validation requirements for these fields to be filled. After the user's email has been captured, your product can request the other fields to be filled in order to fully activate the account.

26. The No Free Plan For You Hack

What is this? If your product has a free version or free tier, remove it.

Why should I do this? The freemium model tends to work well based on usage caps. For example, provide 1GB of storage for free and when a user goes over this, they start paying. Where freemium does not work as well is when it is feature-limited i.e. users can freely use your product forever with some feature limitations, until they decide to upgrade to the full version. Removing this free tier can have a net positive effect in a number of ways:

- **Positioning:** your software is now seen as paid rather than free with a paid option. This difference can increase perceptive value.
- **Support:** absolute user numbers decrease and the overhead of supporting free users disappears, meaning more resources can be allocated towards supporting paying users.
- **Revenue.** The funnel shifts from converting free users to paid, to converting trial to paid. Although absolute numbers at the top of the funnel will decrease, trial users begin the funnel knowing that they will have to make a purchase decision at the end. This can result in higher conversion rates.

Who else is doing this? Over time, many SaaS companies have removed their free plan or significantly de-emphasized it in all literature. Basecamp removed their free plan when rolling out the latest version of their software. CrazyEgg dropped their free plan and doubled revenue in the same month.

How can I implement this? Different companies will need to handle this differently:

- For some companies this will be a decision based on positioning. You are making a firm decision to not be seen as a free product anymore and even if the conversion rate degrades, you will seek to improve it after removing the free plan.
- For other companies this will be a more measured decision. You will have to look at the costs of supporting free users, test the conversion rate with a version of your pricing page that has no free option, and make decisions based on data.

27. The Powered By... Hack

What is this? Include a small logo graphic or a “powered by...” link on any piece of publicly-facing content your user creates.

Why should I do this? Whether you are a blog platform enabling users to create blog posts or an ecommerce marketplace enabling users to upload and sell products, this is an easy way of exposing your company to anyone who sees the content created by your users. Even if you have a logo at the top of the page, it is important to have a call-to-action at the bottom too.

Who else is doing this? The most famous example of this is Hotmail, who kickstarted their viral growth by including a “free email powered by Hotmail” link at the bottom of every email sent out by their users.

How can I implement this? Edit the HTML template for your user-generated content to include a logo or “powered by...” link at the bottom of the page.

Notes

Instead of simply a logo or “powered by...” link try a call to action that states your value proposition too. For example, if you are an ecommerce marketplace you might try something like “Sell your products easily on FooBar.com”.

28. The Case Study Hack

What is this? Include case studies on your site describing how real people or real businesses use your product and what benefits they receive.

Why should I do this? This is a basic form of social proof. Indicating that other people are using and benefitting from your product is often a good motivator for more users to sign up. Your case studies do not need to be of famous companies - even small / unknown companies written up in a human, authentic way can lend credibility.

Who else is doing this? Most mature SaaS companies do this, some even going as far as to do video interviews with their case studies as opposed to just text-based content.

How can I implement this? Request a short interview with your top customers. Key questions you might want to ask would be: how does your product help their business, what were they doing before your product came along, why they chose you over competitors.

Notes

There's always chicken-egg problems to overcome with this tactic. In other words, you need customers to get case studies, but you need case studies to get customers. Many startups overcome this by getting the support of their other startup / business-owning friends to base case studies on.

29. The YouTube SERP Hack

What is this? Create educational YouTube content on a topic that is relevant to the problem you solve.

Why should I do this? YouTube is a huge platform with massive distribution that also happens to be owned by the world's largest search engine. YouTube results often feature in favorable positions on Google's search engine results page. This means that while your website may rank on page 100 for a certain term, with a good YouTube video you could appear on page 1. YouTube also allows for linking to external sites from within a video, meaning with a good CTA you can drive viewers back to your site.

Who else is doing this? Lots of consumer media platforms such as BuzzFeed, Collegehumor etc use bespoke-produced YouTube video content to drive sharing and traffic. For a good example of B2B, KISSmetrics produces educational videos on Google Analytics, since their target market is in this space.

How can I implement this? A good way to start would be to video-ize any presentations you have created that got good engagement on Slideshare. Remember that short, clear and concise content works best. The "top 10 list" format still works well on video. Beyond this you will need to research and decide on your customer segments and what content they would be interested in. While blog content is relatively cheap to produce, video content is more expensive so validate potential video ideas before recording, wherever possible.

30. The Comment Marketing Hack

What is this? Write authoritative blog comments on popular blog posts.

Why should I do this? Blog commenting has two main benefits:

1. Long term, you can increase your thought leadership in specific areas
2. Short term, you can increase the chances of people finding your site

Who else is doing this? Founders of startups often pop up in Stackoverflow, Quora and blog posts with their views on topics.

How can I implement this? The danger of comment marketing is that it can easily be viewed as spam without the right approach. In general:

- Challenge the opinion of the original blog poster but do not attack them. You want to display maturity and authority to the audience in this niche.
- Ensure you are bringing something new to the discussion instead of repeating a point that was already made by another poster - other participants in the discussion will appreciate a new point of view.
- Be clear and succinct.

Notes

It is your choice as to whether you include an obvious link to your product in the comment reply, but this is not always necessary. If your goal is to drive thought leadership it is enough that the audience knows which company you are from rather than adding a link, which some may view as spam no matter how good your comment is.

31. The Distributor Hack

What is this? For every piece of original content you create, have a list of relevant places on the web where you share the content.

Why should I do this? Creating content is just the first step of the challenge of inbound marketing. The real challenge is finding the audience for your content. Tweeting your links and posting them on your Facebook is a standard practice, but there are many more places to distribute your content, to diversify your traffic sources and increase overall inbound traffic.

Who else is doing this? Good inbound marketers are always sharing their content with various communities and influencers.

How can I implement this? Subreddits and forums related to your industry are one place to start. Be warned though that most communities will frown on blatant spamming of your links - mitigate this by using your content as an opener for a discussion (which you then participate in) rather than just posting the link and leaving. You can also reach out and try to get influential people in your industry to retweet or post the links on their blogs.

32. The Competition Hack

What is this? Offer a prize in exchange for participation of some kind. For example tweeting about you, creating some sort of content, or simply a lottery-style lucky draw.

Why should I do this? Competitions are a tried and tested method for driving small bursts of activity. An ROI-positive competition should focus on getting users to either promote you and drive traffic, or to create content that you can use in future marketing materials (e.g. as social proof).

Who else is doing this? Brands often run competitions on social media. Users are encouraged to create a certain type of content (for example to coincide with a new product launch or new promotion) and use a special hashtag. Examples of companies that have used this are all over Instagram, such as Dunkin Donuts, Walkers potato chips and Absolut Vodka.

How can I implement this? The challenge with competitions is getting people to participate. Participation will rely not only on your incentive (i.e. the prize offered) but also how high the barrier to entry is and whether there is any benefit for just participating. The best competitions will provide participants with some kind of reward simply for participating, for example:

- Making the participant appear socially responsible
- Making the participant appear creative
- Making the participant appear exclusive

33. The White Paper Hack

What is this? Create a white paper on your industry and give it away for free.

Why should I do this? Not all content is consumed via websites. PDFs are still portable enough for potential customers to download and share with their colleagues. A link in the PDF would drive people back to your site for more information where you have the opportunity to convert the user to register or start a free trial etc. You can also ask users to register before they can download the free PDF, in order to capture their email to add to a drip campaign.

Who else is doing this? Many SaaS companies use this tactic. KISSmetrics produces high quality PDF-format marketing guides which are used to capture email addresses in order to download, and strengthen KISSmetrics as a thought leader in marketing.

How can I implement this? Creating basic PDFs can be done with most word processing software. For content, you can try focusing on two types:

1. How to-style guides for your industry
2. Industry statistics

(2) can be achieved by performing a survey on your industry. This makes for highly shareable content but remember that this content will have an expiry date - at some point statistics collected will become less relevant due to time elapsed.

34. The You are Mine Now Hack

What is this? For a first-time user, capture the close window action and make an offer to the user.

Why should I do this? There are a percentage of users who, after closing the window on your site, will never come back. Either because they did not like your product offering, they did not understand it, or because they simply forget about you. The last event that you can possibly capture and capitalize on is when they close the window.

Who else is doing this? Internet marketing blogs often use this tactic as a last-ditch attempt to capture a user's email address.

How can I implement this? It is possible to capture the *beforeunload* event in jQuery, which allows you to fire an action when the user closes the window or tab, but before the window itself actually closes. This will for example allow you to overlay a pop up that asks for a user's email address or makes some kind of last-ditch offer.

Notes

More so than other types of pop up, this tactic is particularly intrusive and generally considered “spammy”.

35. The Exit Offer Hack

What is this? Convince users who are canceling their account to stay by offering them a price reduction.

Why should I do this? Some of your users might be canceling because of price. Offering them a reduced price if they stay as a customer is better for revenue than if they cancelled outright.

Who else is doing this? SaaS companies sometimes offer users a reduced price before final cancelation but the industry most well-known for using this tactic is the adult industry (not that I would know about that sort of thing).

How can I implement this? This tactic can backfire if advertised too obviously - satisfied customers may visit your cancellation page simply to receive the reduced price offer. One way to mitigate this would be to display the offer only after the user has visited your cancellation page and clicked “cancel”.

36. The Exit Guilt Trip Hack

What is this? Convince users who cancelled their account to reactivate it with a guilt trip or some creativity.

Why should I do this? If you can get a percentage of users to reactivate a cancelled account this will reduce your churn rate.

Who else is doing this? When you unsubscribed from the Groupon's emails a humorous video would play of an intern being punished for losing a customer (by having hot coffee thrown in his face). This flash of creative humor most likely persuaded a percentage of subscribers to re-subscribe and give Groupon another chance, by reminding them that they are a company with a sense of humor.

How can I implement this? Groupon's example was extremely low tech and completely automated. They recorded a video, then put the video on the post-unsubscribe page with a call to action to re-subscribe. The effectiveness of this tactic will rely on your creativity and copywriting skills more than technology.

37. The Choice Paradox Hack

What is this? When offering a choice to users, try to give as few choices as possible.

Why should I do this? The paradox of choice is a well known psychological phenomenon. The more choice you offer a person, the harder it becomes to actually choose.

Who else is doing this? Often as companies mature, they either consolidate products into fewer categories or remove pricing tiers. SaaS companies often begin with many pricing tiers but reduce the choice to 3.

How can I implement this? Pricing plans can often be eliminated based on data. After some initial customer acquisition you will know which of your plans are the most popular, which bring in the most revenue - removing the worst-performing plans is then a fairly straightforward exercise.

38. The Image Sharing Hack

What is this? Put a sharing link not only on your blog posts, but on the visuals embedded in your blog content.

Why should I do this? Sometimes a user might not want to share your actual blog post, but a graphic embedded in your blog is something they want to share. For example it might be a graph showing some industry statistics or a funny meme etc. This can be good for you as visual content in general gets high levels of engagement on social platforms such as Facebook. Although driving traffic back from visual content can be tricky, you can watermark your images which at the very least helps to build your thought leadership in an industry.

Who else is doing this? Many of the major technology and lifestyle blogs have a feature where if a user hovers over an image, the user has the option to post that image to their social networks.

How can I implement this? This can be implemented by adding a plugin to your blog. If you use jQuery, a plugin called Slingpic can help you achieve this.

39. The Long Copy Hack

What is this? When creating blog content, write longer posts as opposed to shorter posts.

Why should I do this? Entrepreneur Neil Patel conducted research that showed blog content over 2000+ words in length in general fared better than shorter content when it came to search rankings. Longer content is regarded as higher quality by Google.

Who else is doing this? Long form content is all over the web but there are some excellent examples on the GrooveHQ blog.

How can I implement this? Longer form content takes time to put together but for basic ideas on how you can increase the length of a piece of content you can try these tactics:

- Add citations or ask influencers to comment on the post before it gets published, which you then add to the body of the post.
- Add diagrams or visuals which you can then explain or comment on in the body of the post.
- Add essay-style formatting e.g. introduction, hypothesis, conclusion etc.

40. The About Page Hack

What is this? Find pages on your site that you typically do not focus on optimizing, which get a large amount of traffic, and optimize.

Why should I do this? Most likely there are pages on your site that are un-optimized for conversions that still get a decent amount of traffic. The company “About” page is one typical example. By optimizing these pages with better call-to-actions you can increase your conversion rate.

Who else is doing this? Some companies combine a really good About page with an effective call to action for example Basecamp.com/about

How can I implement this? Try adding a relevant call to action on these pages. For example on an “About” page you might say something like:

“Now you have met the team, try out our product! Sign Up Now”

41. The Floating Share Bar Hack

What is this? Put social sharing tools on your blog posts that “follow” the user as they scroll down the page.

Why should I do this? You never know at what point in your content a reader will want to share. Perhaps its at the end, perhaps your first paragraph is enough to convince them that this content is something they want to share with their network. By making the social sharing tools always visible (most commonly via a toolbar that auto-scrolls as the user scrolls) you constantly remind a user that sharing is an option and reduce the risk of them not finding the sharing tools when they decide to share.

Who else is doing this? Lots of blogs have implemented the scrolling social sharing toolbar. One of the more famous would be Buffer.

How can I implement this? This can be implemented by adding a plugin to your blog. If you use jQuery, a plugin called floatShare can help you achieve this.

Notes

There is some debate as to whether social sharing buttons are even necessary. Designers argue that they ruin the look of the page (since their styling can be hard to control) and that users who really want to share will just share anyway regardless of whether there are buttons to help them. Personally I think it is a good practice to show users the option. Social sharing buttons are not just there as a tool, they are also there as a reminder to users that they do not just have to consume the content they can share it too. Sophisticated users might understand this intrinsically but I would wager there exists a percentage of users who need the reminder.

42. The Infographic Hack

What is this? Create an informative and well-designed infographic related to your industry.

Why should I do this? Infographics are widely shared in industry circles if they include interesting content, creative design and a touch of humor. It can be difficult to drive direct traffic back from infographics being shared, but it is possible with social sharing tools. Aside from direct traffic however, infographics are a great way of establishing not only thought leadership but also your branding and company personality at the same time.

Who else is doing this? Newspapers and other media platforms use infographics as a branding and thought leadership tool, for example Entrepreneur.com and Huffington Post.

How can I implement this? Infographic outsourcing companies exist, who will assemble data into infographics for a few hundred dollars. Alternatively you can produce infographics in house, which may take more time and money. Success is not guaranteed with either approach - like content marketing in general, the success of infographics relies not only on the quality of content itself, but on your ability to find an audience for it.

43. The Presenter Hack

What is this? Give presentations at conferences related to your industry.

Why should I do this? While this may seem like more of an offline growth tool, the key with scaling the impact of conferences is encouraging sharing on social. Giving a presentation to 200 people might result in a handful of visits to your site. Giving a presentation to 200 people where 25% of them share something about you with their social networks will result in an exponentially larger amount of visits.

Who else is doing this? Late Apple CEO Steve Jobs was particularly gifted at presentations and soundbites, which had a great impact on Apple's press exposure. During the iPhone launch event he repeatedly used the soundbite "reinvent the phone". This resulted in a large amount of press with the headline "Apple reinvents the phone" which presumably was the desired outcome.

How can I implement this? To maximize the impact of your presentations on social media:

- Establish an @username early on - try to get people to attribute the username if they decide to tweet anything from your presentation.
- Establish some hashtags. The event official hashtag and maybe an industry keyword.
- Make sure you include several sexy soundbites in your presentation. The best presenters - politicians, CEOs - know that one key to getting good press exposure is being highly quotable. Try to include memorable one-liners that include some sort of insight. Make it

obvious to your audience that this is a soundbite by putting these one-liners on their own slide.

Notes

Soundbites can go horribly wrong too, depending on the delivery. Google “developers developers developers” for a spirited example from Microsoft’s Steve Ballmer, which was widely parodied / mocked.

44. The Invite Only Hack

What is this? Instead of allowing anyone to sign up for your product, make your product “by invite only”. This means a user would have to be invited by another user to gain entry.

Why should I do this? Exclusivity can drive user interest in your product as well as help in crafting a story for the media. In best-case scenarios, users wanting invites will turn to social media asking if anyone has an invite, creating a viral loop of early growth.

Who else is doing this? Gmail was invite-only in the early stages of development, which fueled viral growth for the product. Japan’s biggest social network Mixi began life as invite-only and only switched to an open system 4 years after its IPO.

How can I implement this? Plugins that enable invite systems are available for most mature web frameworks. The plugin will disable signups for users who do not have a special invite code, and allocate each new user with a quota of invite codes to send to their friends.

Notes

The invite-only tactic works best when there is a justifiable purpose behind it. Invite-only for the sake of exclusivity alone will not convince users it is worth trying to get an invite.

Justifications can include:

- Exclusive discount deals that by nature cannot be extended to the public

- Complex software architecture that cannot deal with unpredictable influxes of users
- A revolutionary new product that needs to be tested with a small initial group

45. The Drip Campaign Upsell Hack

What is this? Capture a user's email address via the blog and add it to a drip campaign of free content, ending in an upsell to your paid product. A drip campaign is a series of emails (for example 1 per week for 6 weeks) intended to teach a user something or introduce a user to your product.

Why should I do this? Offering a user free content over a set time period and taking the time to build authority in an automated, scalable way can make the eventual upsell convert at a high rate.

Who else is doing this? Services that need to build authority before a user converts, such as SaaS companies at the higher end of the pricing range.

How can I implement this? Most mailing list management software has drip campaign functionality such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact. Your conversion rate will depend on the quality of your drip campaign content, ideally a short but useful course that both teaches the user something new and explains the value of your product.

46. The Little Bighorn Hack

What is this? Instead of going directly after a difficult-to-reach primary target market, aim for an adjacent target market that is easier to access. Network effects then cause the primary target market to become accessible through the adjacent market.

Why should I do this? Identifying your ideal target market is easy but accessing them can be difficult or expensive. By exploiting network effects and group psychology the ideal target market can be reached more easily or for less cost through a secondary market.

Who else is doing this? The most famous example of this is Facebook. When Facebook was in its early stages and focused only on college campuses, often they would face obstacles when marketing towards prestige colleges that already had their own internal social network. Instead of marketing directly to them, Facebook would market to surrounding smaller colleges. Eventually, students from the target college would join because friends from all surrounding colleges were on the unified platform.

How can I implement this? Look for smaller adjacent markets to your primary target market that may be easier to reach.

47. The Headline Hack

What is this? At the top of your homepage you probably have some kind of headline that describes your product in big text. This is used to give visitors an immediate idea of what your product does. This headline should be tested to find the version of text that works the best at getting users to sign up.

Why should I do this? People are inherently lazy and most will pay little attention to the rest of your website, even if you go on to describe benefits and features, have a tutorial video etc. What you can almost guarantee though is that most people will read your headline. By optimizing this one key part of your homepage, you can increase your conversion rate.

Who else is doing this? Most products out of the early growth stage.

How can I implement this? Use an A/B testing tool to show visitors different versions of your headline (try testing 3 variations at first) and see which version results in an increased signup rate.

Notes

There are many copywriting articles on the web with suggestions on how to capture interest with a homepage headline. You can find ideas on copywriting blogs or by googling *headline formulas*. One common tactic is to use the format:

[Do something desirable] in [surprisingly small amount of time or effort]

For example:

- Become a certified SEO consultant in just 7 days
- Learn to play the piano in just minutes per day

- Send a press release in just one click

48. The Roadblock Hack

What is this? Often on blogs or online media you will experience an overlay pop-up encouraging you to add your email to a mailing list, or register for the site to receive some other benefit. The overlay appears over the content, forcing you to either read the overlay or close it.

Why should I do this? The reason this is so prevalent is that it can be effective. The overlay method guarantees that your mailing list signup is seen, as opposed to having the form in a sidebar or footer where it can be easily glossed over.

Who else is doing this? Many online media and medium to large blogs.

How can I implement this? This is achieved via Javascript and most mature frameworks such as jQuery have plugins to support this behavior.

Notes

Overlays can be a polarizing tool to use. On the one hand they can be effective for capturing user emails or introducing users to an offer that they may have otherwise not seen. On the other hand they can be disruptive to users whose primary intent was to view your content, not to sign up for your newsletter or register for your site. Like some other tactics this is one where you must consider the business benefit along with a degradation in general user-experience.

49. The Share The Good News Hack

What is this? At a point in the user lifecycle where a user has enjoyed utility or value from your product, prompt them to share your product with friends either via email or social media.

Why should I do this? Most products encourage users to share with friends as it is a free form of word-of-mouth advertising. However encouraging a user to share is best executed when a user has received value, rather than for example encouraging a user to share immediately after signup.

Who else is doing this? This is often used by social games such as FarmVille. After an achievement early on in the game, a user is invited to share their achievement with friends. As another example, YouTube highlights the sharing buttons to users after a video has finished playing

How can I implement this? Try encouraging a user to share on social after they have created their first piece of content or after they are actively using your product.

Notes

FarmVille and other social games frequently use various mechanics and psychological tricks in order to access a user's friend list or network. For example, sharing an (sometimes rather contrived) achievement, offering more virtual currency, or the rather clever "send a gift to a friend".

50. The Pay With a Tweet Hack

What is this? Give away a freebie (extra functionality, free shipping, extension of trial) but instead of asking for an email address, ask users to pay by tweeting a link to your site.

Why should I do this? Depending on your objectives, exposure could be more important than capturing email addresses. Getting users to tweet about you helps to expose you to a wide audience.

Who else is doing this? Some big brands have experimented with this type of social media campaign. Kellogg's used the pay with a tweet mechanic when launching a new product line of Special K crackers. Visitors to a pop up store in London were asked to pay with a tweet, in return for a free sample of the new product.

How can I implement this? Services exist to help you execute these types of campaigns. The straightforwardly-named site Pay With a Tweet is a product that helps clients manage this.

Notes

As with The Queue Jumper technique, this mechanic has a weakness - if users simply delete the tweet after receiving the benefit (perhaps to avoid being seen as a conduit for advertising), the impact of the campaign is lost. To avoid this situation, a campaign manager must think creatively. The golden rule is to make the user look good in some way such as:

- Try to make the user appear attractive.
- Try to make the user appear funny or creative.

- Try to make the user appear exclusive or important.

Social content of the above nature is more likely to be kept in the user's social stream rather than deleted out of embarrassment.

51. The Scent Hack

What is this? When a user clicks on a specific ad or call to action, preserve the message of the ad in the landing page the user arrives at. For example if a user clicks on an ad that says “Get 60% off Women's Running Shoes” they should be taken to a landing page that says “Get 60% off Women's Running Shoes”, rather than say, a generic landing page that says “Get up to 70% off your favorite brands now”.

Why should I do this? Seeing a different message other than the one responded to can be a jarring experience for a user. This creates a friction that can result in some users exiting the page. Preserving the messaging (known as “scent”) of your ads or call to action and carrying through to the resultant landing page avoids confusing users by reinforcing that they are getting exactly what they clicked on.

Who else is doing this? Groupon was a good example of this in its aggressive early expansion phase. Googling for “spa discounts” would inevitably result in a Groupon spa ad in the sponsored ad placement on the search engine results page. Clicking this would bring users to a special spa-themed landing page with spa-related messaging and visuals, with no mention of the other product categories on offer.

How can I implement this? The simplest way is to have multiple landing pages and be mindful of which landing page you are pointing users to when building your ads or links. Beyond this, you can build dynamic pages - single pages that swap out visuals or text according to a query string parameter. The latter is easier to manage than the former, when rolling out many alternative landing pages.

52. The Landlord Hack

What is this? On a user-generated content product that reviews people, companies or products often a placeholder page will be created for each entity. For example on a site that reviews local businesses, a placeholder page would be automatically created for each local business in a given area, before that local business actually creates it themselves.

Why should I do this? By seeding content and creating placeholder pages (or getting users to create them) you reduce the barrier for other users to contribute meta content - for example photos, reviews and product data. It also can result in the local business signing up (or paying up) to “own” the page and therefore have more control over the content.

Who else is doing this? Local business review sites are known for using this tactic. Support forum software companies also used this tactic in the early stages. In both cases, businesses were encouraged to sign up for premium paid accounts to own the page and enable advanced moderation controls.

How can I implement this? Seeding content is technically a simple process. One example of implementation would be to create an excel file of data (for example local business data) which can be outsourced or created by interns / part time staff. Once the excel file is ready, it can be imported to your production database via a custom script.

Notes

Although not illegal this tactic can be frowned upon. In extreme cases it is viewed as a form of extortion, for example where a popular product refuses to display positive reviews of a local business unless that business claims the page by paying for a premium account.

53. The Human Pyramid Hack

What is this? When you have a promotion or a new product, get your twitter following to tweet about it by incentivizing them with a countdown or a countup of some kind - for every retweet the campaign page gets, the counter increments by 1. If it reaches a certain goal, you unlock an additional special promotion for all. For example, an ecommerce store might use The Human Pyramid hack to run a campaign whereby if 1000 people tweet about your summer sale, everyone gets free shipping.

Why should I do this? Like The Lottery, the more people who retweet about your promotion or campaign, the more exposure you get. However, group participation towards a common goal that benefits everyone is a better use of group psychology than The Lottery, which simply plays on an individual's desire to win something for themselves.

Who else is doing this? Uniqlo launched a campaign with similar mechanics to this but the amount of retweets was tied to an actual product price. The more retweets the campaign page got, the more the price of a promotional product was reduced. It was called the Lucky Counter campaign. Groupon and group buying sites also employ this tactic - sales are not guaranteed to happen unless a set number of people buy them.

How can I implement this? The low-tech approach would be to simply put a twitter button (with built-in counter) onto your campaign page. To achieve something more like the Uniqlo campaign where the user sees a custom-designed counter either counting up or down towards a goal, backend integration with the Twitter API would be necessary.

54. The Queue Jumper Hack

What is this? This is where a membership waiting list can be skipped via social sharing. Users are freely able to sign up but upon signing up a user enters a waiting list (sometimes their waiting list number is shown, sometimes it is not) and the user is encouraged to “bump” their place up in the queue by inviting their friends or sharing the page via social media.

Why should I do this? The waiting list itself can lend a sense of exclusivity to your product. The additional queue jumping via social sharing mechanic adds a layer of promotion on top of this. Your product gets exposed to the social networks of anyone who wants to jump the queue.

Who else is doing this? The most famous example was Mailbox, who employed a waiting list system to prevent too many people signing up at once since the product was still in beta. Users would sign up and see that they were the (for example) 153,280th person in the queue, but would have the option to bump themselves up the queue if they shared the app on social media. Many users opted to do this, and as a result Mailbox was widely spread throughout Twitter soon after launching. Mailbox never actually publicly launched and was acquired by Dropbox while still in beta for a reported \$100 million.

How can I implement this? The waiting list functionality itself could be achieved with a cron job that simply runs every hour or day and updates a small batch of users to an upgraded status. As with The Human Pyramid, the social sharing component will need Twitter / Facebook API integration to function properly. A user would click a button which would post to their social accounts and they would be moved up the queue in your database.

Notes

One caveat with any kind of social sharing mechanic is that the user can simply delete any content posted from your system, after they receive the benefit (such as jumping the queue). This negates the point of asking them to share. While it is technically possible to check for this behavior via social APIs and penalize users who do this, it is an added layer of complexity for what may for you just be a minor edge case.

55. The Multi Post Hack

What is this? When a user creates content on your platform, you give them the option to post the same content to other social networks with just one click.

Why should I do this? It is a low-barrier way for users to share across a wider network and be seen by more people, which much of the time is what users want. It also means your product gets exposed to a wider network, either via API attribution (where Facebook automatically displays the name of the app that posted the content) or by adding a watermark etc to posted content such as “Created by (App Name)”.

Who else is doing this? Instagram implemented a low-barrier way for users to share their Instagram posts to Twitter and Facebook by just pressing some buttons in the UI. AirBNB famously created an unofficial post-to-Craigslist feature for their room listings which enabled users to tap into the vast Craigslist market. Craigslist eventually blocked AirBnB from doing this, but only after AirBnB had already received some benefit of wider exposure.

How can I implement this? Official APIs exist for most mature social platforms to allow this sort of functionality. In the case of AirBnB however, Craigslist had no official API that allowed posting. The team essentially reverse-engineered their own API allowing automated posting. Another word for this would be an *exploit*.

Notes

There are two main risks involved in doing what AirBnB did.

- Legal risk. Often this type of action goes against the terms of service of the 3rd party.
- Time investment risk. Platforms are not static, they are always changing. The 3rd party could either change something on their platform therefore unknowingly breaking your exploit, or they could deliberately change something on their platform in order to disable the exploit.

56. The Poke Poke Poke Hack

What is this? When signed up to a social networking platform, a user tags or adds a label to another user or a piece of content related to another user. This in turn sends a notification which prompts the other user to verify the content.

Why should I do this? This is a form of re-engagement action where a company can use their active users to reactivate inactive users. Once the mechanics are in place it can increase the overall level of activity on your platform in a passive way that requires no further input from you.

Who else is doing this? In the early days of Facebook a notification would be sent out whenever a user was tagged in a photo. Eventually these notifications became optional. LinkedIn also uses an “endorsement” mechanic where one user can endorse another user for a particular job skill, which results in a notification being sent and the receiving user encouraged to click a link and endorse the original user to reciprocate.

How can I implement this? Attaching a sendout of an email when an action happens on a platform is a fairly common pattern. Most modern frameworks have hooks or callbacks for this.

Note

Notifications can quickly become overwhelming for users. Although a basic system might send one notification per action, an evolved and perhaps more elegant system would either send a summary or allow the user granular control over which notifications they receive and which they do not.

57. The Timebomb Hack

What is this? At any stage where a user must make some kind of critical decision such as a purchase, set a time limit for them and display it visually in a countdown.

Why should I do this? This is a basic pressure tactic. Giving users a limited time to make a decision helps increase conversions. Users will psychologically motivated to move through a process faster, which can result in more users completing a process. It can also have practical applications in high demand online shopping, clearing out a users shopping cart to prevent users from “reserving” limited quantity items indefinitely.

Who else is doing this? Many ecommerce stores use this tactic during checkout.

How can I implement this? The visual counter can be achieved with Javascript, for which there are various countdown plugins available for frameworks such as jQuery. Integrating the counter with a backend callback when the counter reaches zero is the harder part of implementing this, but you may find this level of integration is unnecessary in the beginning. The point of the counter is more a pressure tactic to finish an action, not to penalize users if the time does actually run out.

Notes

Pressure can backfire. Give your users too little time and you may frustrate some of them into closing the window or going elsewhere. On the other hand give them too much time and the motivational effect of this tactic is lessened.

58. The Almost There Hack

What is this? Often you will want a user to complete a few actions after signing up such as upload a profile picture, fill out their profile, follow some other users etc. Indicate to users how many actions they have completed and how many are left, with a progress bar or checklist.

Why should I do this? An unfilled progress bar with clear instructions on how to fill it up is a good enough psychological motivator such that many users will follow the instructions and complete the actions you want them to.

Who else is doing this? LinkedIn uses a progress bar to show how complete your profile is. Progress bars are widely used by social gaming platforms as an indicator of incomplete or pending game tasks.

How can I implement this? You will need to decide in advance what user actions you want to include as part of the user's progress bar. After that it is simply a case of doing some conditional checks and displaying the progress bar accordingly with an inline style to alter the length depending on what a user has completed.

59. The Winback Hack

What is this? Send an automated email to inactive users and incentivize them to return to your site.

Why should I do this? Users become inactive for various reasons. Some are forgetful, some are busy - a winback campaign is designed to bring them back to you. This is beneficial since these users have already been “acquired” and bringing inactive users back to your product can be considerably cheaper and easier than acquiring brand new users.

Who else is doing this? Most mature ecommerce platforms implement winback campaigns after a month or more of inactivity. If you have ever received an offer from an ecommerce store long after registering, or received a seasonal promotional newsletter - these are all forms of winback campaigns.

How can I implement this? Your customer database will need to keep a record of the last time a user logged in. If you are using a mature authentication system such as Devise for Ruby on Rails, this should already be taken care of for you. Once that data is being recorded, a simple winback campaign can be implemented by automatically sending a promotional email to those users who have not logged in for 30 days. You can test this threshold, earlier or later may work better for you. The contents of the email itself could be a discount coupon, a seasonal promotion or simply telling the user about activity that’s been happening on their account since they last logged in.

Notes

The best types of winback campaigns are highly personalized to the user you are trying to win back. Although this can be difficult to implement, by nature a winback campaign is often your last chance at communicating with a user

before they unsubscribe from your emails, so it is prudent to put in as much effort as possible in bringing them back to your site.

60. The Decoy Pricing Hack

What is this? When presenting a set of price packages to a user, include one price that is there as a decoy in order to encourage users to purchase one of the other packages. For example given three prices A, B and C you might make C disproportionately more expensive than A and B, to give the appearance that A and B are cheap by comparison. This is also known as Price Anchoring.

Why should I do this? Choices can create a paradox - by giving users more choice, you make it harder to choose. Price anchoring is a technique that can help persuade users to make a purchasing decision in a particular direction. For critical pages such as a pricing page, this can increase your conversions.

Who else is doing this? A good example of price anchoring in practice was tested by Dan Ariely in his book Predictably Irrational. He tested the following price packages for The Economist with 100 students from MIT.

Test Group A

- Web subscription \$59
- Print subscription \$59
- Print & Web subscription \$125

Test Group B

- Web subscription \$59
- Print & Web subscription \$125

The package that resulted in the most revenue was the 3rd choice in Test Group A. Nobody chose the 2nd choice in Test Group A. That was simply there as a price anchor, to psychologically reinforce what a better deal the 3rd choice was.

How can I implement this? Optimizing your pricing is something you should A/B test as opposed to making blind changes. You can use an A/B testing tool to create multiple versions of your pricing page in order to test the best combination of prices and whether or not price anchoring works for you.

61. The Webinar Hack

What is this? Hold an online streaming web conference in which you teach something useful to an audience, as well as introduce your product.

Why should I do this? Webinars are a hybrid of offline and online marketing. They are a useful tool for businesses that suit the “roadshow” or door-to-door style of marketing, where a product benefits from being demonstrated or introduced by an expert, resulting in signups to a free trial or licensing deal. Webinars are useful since you can do everything from the comfort of your office, rather than going round local businesses knocking on doors, touring trade shows or attending conferences. The resultant recorded video is also content you can use in future marketing campaigns.

Who else is doing this? Enterprise-oriented or local business-oriented SaaS companies often offer webinars as a way of prospecting new customers.

How can I implement this? Choose an interesting topic that will teach your prospective customers something. Prepare in advance and make sure your dialogue is entertaining and educational. Do not simply read off slides. The webinar itself can be streamed via a free service. You will also need to promote your webinar in advance in order to sign up interested viewers - these can be captured via your website, a partner, ads etc.

62. The Unboxing Hack

What is this? For companies shipping physical goods, make your unboxing experience unique or personal.

Why should I do this? The act of taking something new out of its packaging is known as “unboxing”. This is a ritual that often gets posted to YouTube, Instagram and other social sharing sites, if the unboxing experience is good enough. If a user shares their unboxing experience, it exposes your branding and products to their friends and audience, giving you wider visibility.

Who else is doing this? Many customers upload their unboxing videos of their monthly packages received from Beauty Box companies. This is presumably because of the surprise element - customers do not know what is going to be in the box - therefore capturing the moment on video allows them to share the surprise with others.

How can I implement this? Customers are more likely share unboxing videos when there is something unique or personalized about your packaging or product. Make sure that users know up front to expect a surprise. You can try to incentivize unboxing by offering prizes or simply telling users a special hashtag to use when unboxing.

63. The Vanity Hack

What is this? At any point a user accomplishes a goal or reaches a milestone in your app, give them the opportunity to share (or brag) about it on their social networks.

Why should I do this? This tactic exploits a user's vanity in order to gain access to their social network, exposing you to an exponentially larger amount of people. While it is hard to get users to share something about your company on their social networks, it is comparatively easier to get them to share something about themselves (with a link to your company).

Who else is doing this? Social games use this tactic frequently but it was also famously used by Foursquare in their early growth stages - users would proudly post to Facebook when they were made "Mayor" of a location by frequently visiting it, giving Foursquare more exposure on social networks.

How can I implement this? Think about the milestones a user could pass while using your product and productize them into a sharing event. This does not need to be complicated, a javascript overlay and some default social media sharing buttons will suffice with a strong call to action.

64. The Intro Video Hack

What is this? Create a short introduction video of your product in action and put it at the top of your homepage.

Why should I do this? There is a type of customer who would rather watch a 30-second video than read a page of text. And for certain types of product you can explain a lot more with 30-seconds of animation and narration, than you can from relying on users to read your copy. Better understanding of your product leads to more properly-validated customers signing up.

Who else is doing this? Many SaaS apps have video demos at the top of their page. Kickstarter is also famous for making video previews prominent in their page design, and in many cases a well-produced video can play a large part in the success of a campaign. In both cases, video is an important tool as it helps viewers to easily understand a solution to a complicated business process, or visualize a new kind of product.

How can I implement this? In general a video of this type will need to introduce the viewer to the problem and then introduce the solution. Short videos with simple narration / text overlays work best. If yours is a web app these often do not transfer well to video, so you may choose to express your solution in a more visual way, for example with animation / VFX, rather than showing the product itself.

65. The Aha Moment Hack

What is this? Finding the moment in your user's early lifecycle where they finally understand the benefit, and then optimize towards this moment.

Why should I do this? The Aha Moment is an important concept that will shape how you introduce new users to the features of your product (also known as "onboarding"). By optimizing your onboarding process to maximize the amount of users who reach the Aha Moment, you can expect to increase your engagement and repeat usage metrics.

Who else is doing this? Most big name apps / products have an onboarding process - a tutorial period immediately after a user signs up, that explains how to use the app. Twitter found that if a user follows more than 30 people, their engagement spikes; suddenly their feed comes alive with updates and they understand the benefit of the product. Below this number, engagement levels were not as high - presumably because the velocity of a feed following only a few people is slow, and therefore lacks the addictive feeling. Now, during Twitter's onboarding process, users are encouraged to follow as many people as possible, with Twitter giving many suggestions to new users.

How can I implement this? Finding the Aha Moment is an exercise in looking at data and also making qualitative observations. Face to face user testing can be helpful here but data will help make final decisions. Essentially you will need to look at the data for unengaged users and compare it to that of engaged users. You will need to look for differences, perhaps a step that was or was not completed, early activity levels, how long it took them to perform an action, to name just a few.

66. The High Score List Hack

What is this? Display some kind of leaderboard of top users in your product.

Why should I do this? Similar to The Vanity Hack but the purpose is not to get users to share with their social networks. The purpose is simply to encourage more activity from the user. This exploits a basic competitive urge in some users who will want to either get on the leaderboard or get to the *top* of it.

Who else is doing this? Leaderboards are not a new concept. The first widespread use in software was arcade games, beginning with Pong. Arcade-goers would try to beat each others high scores in order to get their name displayed on the leaderboard - the repeated attempts of which meant more revenue for arcade proprietors. This mechanic translates well to online games and other social media applications. World of Warcraft is supported by various cottage industries, one of them being the tracking and ranking of guilds / players. Klout also used this mechanic as a viral method for growth - users were given a social ranking from 1 to 100, then shown their friends who have higher scores than them, and finally encouraged to boost their score over time and keep coming back to Klout in order to check their progress.

How can I implement this? The most basic form of score is “number of times a user has performed X action”. This kind of data is simple to turn into a leaderboard. Other examples might be rankings (e.g. how highly-voted a user or object is) or some kind of arbitrary scoring like the Klout score.

67. The Auto Follow Hack

What is this? Automatically follow popular accounts on behalf of new users.

Why should I do this? With many social products there exists what is known as the *cold start* problem. This is where a new user signs up but has no history of activity on the product yet, so they are faced with a blank page. This experience can leave users confused and unclear of the value proposition.

Who else is doing this? Pinterest is one of the more famous examples. To avoid the cold start problem, as part of the onboarding process Pinterest shows you pins from categories that you like and encourages you to follow users or repin content thus populating your account with data.

How can I implement this? Before you have critical mass, you can try simply auto-following popular users (but giving an easy opt-out). Once more mass is achieved, you can switch to an opt-in method where you give users recommendations and allow them to follow the ones they like.

68. The Thundercats Ho Hack

What is this? At a specific point in the user's early lifecycle, encourage them to invite other users if there is some collaborative benefit.

Why should I do this? While it is common to ask users to invite other users especially if yours is a collaborative business tool, choosing the right place in the lifecycle will ensure maximum conversion. You want to avoid asking the user too early, since the user may not trust your product and / or may not see the benefit yet.

Who else is doing this? The onboarding flow of Basecamp is a good example of an appropriate point to ask users to invite others. Roughly speaking it is as follows:

1. User is given a sample project populated with various content
2. User views all the features in the sample project and starts to understand the value proposition
3. User creates a new project, with the option to invite collaborators
4. User creates a new piece of content in the project, with the option to invite collaborators

How can I implement this? Hold off from asking users to invite collaborators until after the value proposition is clear to the user. The user must know that inviting collaborators is something that benefits them, not something that benefits your product with an expanded user base.

69. The One Time Offer Hack

What is this? For first time visitors to your site, make them an exclusive offer that expires soon.

Why should I do this? A first time visitor has not yet decided on the quality of your product - they have not yet decided that they do not want it. Offering these *neutral* users an offer that is purely discount-oriented can succeed in capturing those users who are susceptible to deals.

Who else is doing this? Ecommerce stores sometimes provide incentives such as “buy within the next 10 minutes to receive free shipping”. Infomercials also often use the line “call within the next hour to receive...” to incentivize the customer with added extras to the original offer.

How can I implement this? Users should not see this offer if they come back to the site at a later time (since this defeats the purpose of the offer - urgency) so your site will need to store a cookie when the user arrives on the site. Your site will then know that anyone without the cookie is therefore a first-time user and the offer should be shown. Subsequently, users *with* the cookie should not be shown the offer.

70. The Annual Upgrade Hack

What is this? Offer engaged users an annual upgrade in a discounted one-time-only offer.

Why should I do this? If yours is a subscription-based product, getting a year's subscription up front is better for cash flow than monthly subscriptions. However, annual subscriptions are hard to sell to new users - they have to understand the value proposition very well in order to be comfortable paying for a year up front. The value proposition is better understood once the user has been a paying customer for a few months. At this point, the user is more open to the idea of an annual subscription and incentivizing with a discounted annual plan can convince users to upgrade.

Who else is doing this? Hosting company WP Engine upsells customers towards an annual subscription during the early lifecycle. After a few months, customers receive an email with the subject "Two months of free product at WP Engine when you upgrade to annual billing" with the offer. Founder Jason Cohen says this single automated email accounts for around 3% of revenue.

How can I implement this? A simple way to implement this tactic is to simply send the customer an email upon their 3rd payment (we assume a customer who has used the app for 3 months is engaged) with the annual upgrade offer. Alternatively if you want to keep the offer more exclusive, a filter can be applied where you do not send the email to all customers at the 3 month mark, but instead send to a subset - for example customers at the 3 month mark who have fulfilled certain amounts of activity criteria.

71. The Horoscope Hack

What is this? Ask a user a series of questions and define their personality based on the answers.

Why should I do this? People love to be defined. Some wear it as a badge of honor, others are surprised by it, others vehemently disagree - but in all cases this is an opportunity for the user to share something on social media to compare with their friends. A mechanism whereby you help a user define themselves in either a serious way or a humorous way, is an engine for social sharing.

Who else is doing this? “Which _____ are you?” is a style of content that’s older than the internet. The web just makes this more interactive. Buzzfeed puts out some particularly obscure ones which get a high amount of social sharing, such as Which Muppet Are You? and Which Breakfast Cereal Are You?

How can I implement this? Picking the subject is a challenge, but a good base template is the aforementioned “Which _____ are you?”. From there you will need to decide what has the right combination of relevance to your target audience plus quirkiness / humor potential to maximize the resultant social sharing. Creating the horoscope-style quiz itself is a fairly simple exercise - a number of plugins for jQuery exist for this purpose, such as SlickQuiz.

72. The Negative Follow Up Hack

What is this? Send an automatic email to users who did not buy your product and ask them why.

Why should I do this? Qualitative feedback is incredibly important and can help you identify areas where your value proposition is weak, or identify aspects of your product that users did not understand. It can be difficult to collect qualitative feedback from non-customers but an automated email simplifies this process greatly.

Who else is doing this? SaaS vendors often send this type of follow up email to people who did not purchase during their free trial.

How can I implement this? You can simply use any email marketing software to send a drip campaign a few days after a user's free trial ends. A good format is a personal-looking email from a real person (e.g. a founder) asking why the user did not upgrade and that you value their feedback. The desired outcome is that the user simply replies to the email, giving the founder qualitative feedback and the opportunity to open a dialogue if necessary.

Notes

This is one of my first recommendations to all startups. Talking to customers who did not purchase can reveal so much, for example (all real-life examples):

- Product did not have X critical feature
- Did not understand how to use product
- Did not even get past the onboarding

- Could not find the buy button
- Did not want to pay with PayPal
- Was waiting until start of month to begin subscription
- Waiting for purchase approval from higher up

And many others. Some of these are an opportunity to think about how to improve your product. Others are indicators that the user is still in the sales funnel and that you probably should remind them at a later point. It is all incredibly useful information that you would never have gathered without a follow-up email.

73. The Teaser Hack

What is this? When a new user comes across your product via a search engine or a social network, not all of the content is viewable until a user registers.

Why should I do this? If your content is something a user came with the intent to view, requiring registration (or even payment) before viewing the full content can accelerate your growth rate.

Who else is doing this? Many online media outlets. Newspapers and industry-specific magazines often close-off articles after a certain amount of time has passed, requiring either registration or a premium subscription. Q&A site Quora only shows the first response to threads if you enter via a Google search - full viewing is only available to those with the app or who have registered.

How can I implement this? Most mature CMS platforms such as Wordpress have a “paywall” plugin. These plugins disable posts that are of a certain age or over, allowing them to only be seen by users who have registered or paid. A variation of this is allowing users to freely browse all content until a certain milestone is reached, for example after viewing 5 articles freely a user must register to view a 6th.

Notes

Google penalizes products that use CSS / Javascript to hide content or products that are open to search engines but dynamically require signup before a human can view all the content. Some products get around this by showing a (subjectively) useful amount of content before hiding the rest. In

Q&A site Quora's case, the product shows the first and most highly-voted answer of the question thread.

74. The Content Seeding Hack

What is this? For a user-generated content site, add content yourself that looks as though it was created by other users.

Why should I do this? User-generated content sites all suffer from the same early obstacle - the chicken-egg problem whereby early users are reluctant to create content because nobody is looking at the site, and nobody is looking at the site because content is not being created. Founders can mitigate this by “faking” content creation and adding content themselves, but making it appear as though it was created by other users. This helps give the appearance of activity on the site, which in turn can encourage legitimate users to start contributing content.

Who else is doing this? Massive discussion board Reddit famously kick-started their platform with the founders operating a number of fake accounts with which to post content.

How can I implement this? There are a few different levels of content seeding.

- Founders or employees operate fake accounts in order to create content.
- Friends and family members are asked to create accounts in order to create content.
- Widespread outsourced content creation - many outsourcing companies offer this kind of product for a fee.

- Automated content creation - automatically importing content from somewhere else and making it appear as your own, but with a link to the source.

75. The Remarketing Tag Hack

What is this? Add a remarketing tag to the header of your site before you even start remarketing.

Why should I do this? Remarketing allows you to advertise only to people who have seen your site before. Convincing a user to come back to a site they already know (especially with some kind of offer) can be much easier than convincing a user who has never heard of you. Therefore in terms of ROI, remarketing can be highly effective - albeit with a more limited audience size than pure display ads. The reason you should add the remarketing tag early on is because adding this tag will add all subsequent visitors to your remarketing audience. That means when you are finally ready to start remarketing, you have an audience ready to go - as opposed to zero audience if you had not yet installed the remarketing tag.

Who else is doing this? Generally if you hire an SEM agency, installing this tag is one of the things they will recommend you do first. As for who uses remarketing as a technique, in their pre-IPO phase of aggressive expansion Groupon was notorious for using remarketing - any user who had visited their site would likely only see Groupon display ads across various ad networks in the subsequent weeks and months of them browsing the web.

How can I implement this? There are a number of remarketing platforms but in the case of Google Adwords, to implement the remarketing tag it is simply a case of copy pasting a tag into the header of your site. After this point you will begin to build a remarketing audience automatically, as people visit your site.

76. The Two Way Incentive Hack

What is this? Offer a user an incentive for inviting a friend, and offer the friend an incentive for signing up.

Why should I do this? Inviting a friend is an action that is often incentivized in some way. By making the action a win-win for all, you can maximize the potential conversion rate of the invite system.

Who else is doing this? PayPal famously had a monetary two way offer in its early growth stage. New customers were given \$10 for signing up and the friend who referred them was also given \$10. This was real money that could be used to pay for goods and services or simply withdrawn as cash. PayPal spent tens of millions of dollars to acquire millions of users, before they gradually phased this referral system out.

How can I implement this? Although not technically difficult to implement at a basic level, if money (or discounts etc) are involved you will need measures in place to mitigate abuse. For example:

- Tokens that expire so invitees cannot sign up over and over again to receive the reward multiple times.
- Verifications to check that emails are valid and not being faked.
- IP checking to make sure the inviter and the invitee are from different IPs and not simply the same person creating multiple accounts in order to receive the rewards.

77. The Email Detective Hack

What is this? If you are in business development, do not be dissuaded by not knowing an email address of a prospect. There are quick ways to find out or guess.

Why should I do this? Contacting a prospect is often the first step in closing a sale!

Who else is doing this? Anyone who has ever worked in business development or sales will have come up with creative ways to find out an email address of a specific person.

How can I implement this? Follow these steps to guess the email of a specific person within a company.

1. Find a company you want to contact
2. Find a person within the company who you want to contact. You will need their first and last name.
3. Send an email to the company contact form with a general inquiry
4. Receive the response and note the format of the sender's email address
5. Use the format of the email address to directly email your desired contact. For example for a person called Joe Brown, the format could be joebrown@company.com, jbrown@company.com, joe@company.com, joe.brown@company.com etc

78. The Email Schedule Hack

What is this? When sending out an email newsletter to customers, test different sending times beforehand and choose the best performing time slot.

Why should I do this? Email newsletters are more successful the more they are opened / interacted with. Getting an email opened will depend on a few factors but most influential are:

- The subject of your email
- The timing of your email

Who else is doing this? You will notice that businesses for whom email is a primary marketing channel will use a consistent strategy when sending out email newsletters. For example Groupon sends out their daily newsletter at 9am in the Asia region. This is a time slot they have tested to be most effective for this market.

How can I implement this? Email marketing software will let you conduct A/B tests on your email newsletters, as well as slice your total list into a smaller list for testing. You will want to test day of the week and time slot for sending. As a benchmark to start with you can try Thursday at 9am. In general it is thought to be less effective to send emails at the very start or very end of the working week - but again, this will depend on your target market.

79. The Pre-filled Form Hack

What is this? Wherever possible, pre-fill form fields with information if you have it at hand.

Why should I do this? Removing barriers to filling out forms is a vital part of increasing conversion rates. We have seen in a previous hack the benefit of removing unnecessary form fields, but sometimes form fields are mandatory. However, we may already have enough data available in order to pre-fill these fields, making it faster for users to complete the form. This can increase your conversion rate.

Who else is doing this? The most common example of this is prefilling a country field on a form, based on your current IP. This can be seen in many examples across the web such as signing up for a Google account, the form of which pre-fills your country and dialing code.

How can I implement this? There are two clear use cases:

1. Prefilling a users email address. For example, a user has subscribed to your marketing emails (perhaps an online course, or news updates) but has not yet signed up for your product itself. When they decide to sign up, they click a link in the email that brings them to a form where their email is already pre-filled. This can be achieved since you already know their email, which can be appended to the signup link via a url parameter and then added to the form.
2. Prefilling a location / country, based on the detected geolocation of the user. There are 3rd party APIs available to get a users country and city based on IP. However you do not have to use a 3rd party, you can install IP tables (these can be found for free) into your database and

do the lookup yourself, which can be faster. Or if you are using a framework such as Ruby on Rails you can install something like GeoKit which will provide you with an internal API to use for geolocation.

80. The Thank You Hack

What is this? Send amazing thank you letters to special customers.

Why should I do this? It is simply good business practice to be appreciative of customers. However where this can produce some direct ROI is if the act of gratitude is so creative, or thoughtful that the user decides to share it on social media. In much the same way as the Unboxing Hack, users often are open to sharing their interaction with brands - especially if that interaction is unique or somehow makes them look good in front of their social network.

Who else is doing this? Many acts of corporate gratitude or kindness make their way to social media. One example is when the son of a family staying at a Ritz Carlton accidentally left his toy giraffe in the room after the family checked out and arrived home. The father rang the hotel who promptly found the toy, but went an extra step further. The hotel provided a series of photos of the toy enjoying its time at the hotel (sipping cocktails by the pool, relaxing in bed etc) so the father could tell the son that his toy is on a mini vacation and he will be back soon - rather than simply saying to wait for a couple of days while it gets sent back home. The story and photos were shared by the father on social media, which then went viral around the world as an example of amazing customer service.

How can I implement this? You can automate this kind of interaction, for example if you are an ecommerce store, sending an automatic email a week after a customer has received their first order. Alternatively while you cannot send personal messages to everyone, you can segment your database and send personal thank yous to customers who fit certain criteria for example:

- Customers who spent over a certain amount

- Customers who live within a certain distance (to keep postal costs down)
- Customers who have a presence on social media

Notes

This type of interaction works best when it is personalized and not automated. While an automated strategy could produce positive ROI, it is also easily detected by users. The purpose here is not simply to say thank you, but to establish a personal relationship with the customer which does not translate well to automation. Although clunky and analogue, a handwritten note is an order of magnitude more personal than an automatic email.

81. The Welcome Email Hack

What is this? Send a welcome email to users after they sign up, in order to orient them with your product.

Why should I do this? There will be a percentage of users who sign up for your product and one or more of these things happens:

- User gets distracted and goes elsewhere
- User does not find a feature they are looking for (that is in fact supported by your product)
- User has a question about your product but is too lazy to look for your contact page

The welcome email is a place to solve all of these problems. At the very least it is a reminder in the user's inbox that they signed up for your product. More than this however, it is an opportunity to both answer users questions before they might have them and also a place to establish a communication channel to tell users you would love to hear from them. Especially at the early stages of a startup, you *need* users to contact you with positive / negative feedback and you can greatly increase the chances of this happening by proactively asking for it.

Who else is doing this? SaaS companies tend to send welcome emails as a way of onboarding new users. Sprout Social sends two welcome emails:

1. First, a text email that focuses on support channels. It gives the email, phone and twitter handle through which to get support.

2. Second, a well-designed HTML email explaining how to get the most out of the product, via connecting social profiles, attending webinars and inviting collaborators.

How can I implement this? Sending a user an email after an event like signup is a feature provided by most web frameworks. The key to the success of your welcome email will be the content. At the very least you should seek to:

- Provide support contact channels to the user
- Answer the user's key questions (e.g. does this product do X?)
- Encourage users to get through the onboarding process

82. The Polyglot Hack

What is this? Translate your site into other languages.

Why should I do this? Offering your site in another language can lower the barrier to adoption in that particular market. If the market size is large enough, this can increase metrics across the board, from social sharing to user sign ups to revenue.

Who else is doing this? Facebook famously crowdsourced their translations into other languages. Thousands of volunteer users translated the hundreds of snippets of text that make up the Facebook UI, with a voting system in place so users could choose the best native translations for their languages. This was a major step in Facebook's international expansion.

How can I implement this? Roughly speaking you have three options when it comes to top-down translation:

- Translation by a professional agency
- Crowdsourced translation. This can be via a paid service such as Gengo or a free implementation such as the Facebook example.
- Machine translation.

Implementing multiple languages in your product is most likely a solved problem if you are using a mature web framework. Language/locale support is an out of the box feature for frameworks such as Ruby on Rails.

83. The Multi API Hack

What is this? Integrate with multi-API platforms such as Zapier or IFTTT.

Why should I do this? Inter-API platforms such as Zapier or IFTTT mean that performing one integration gives you access you many APIs, which saves you time and gives your users more flexibility in how they use your product. It is also a good way to boost your social proof since you can advertise your ability to integrate with multiple products (albeit from a singular platform).

Who else is doing this? Many well-known SaaS companies integrate with the above platforms and users have then gone on to create custom integrations providing niche functionality such as Buffer-to-Google-calendar export.

How can I implement this? Getting on these platforms generally requires a manual approval process and your product will need to have an API for the platform to use before you begin. At a bare minimum your product will need to output some kind of RSS or JSON feed for the platform to query.

84. The Automatic Content Hack

What is this? Use your data to automatically create many pages of content.

Why should I do this? Websites with a larger number of pages of unique content fare better in terms of search rankings because:

- More pages means a wider variety of search engine queries can be captured
- More pages gives an indication to search engines of depth of your content. Depth can help to signal authority (but it is just one of many factors).

Who else is doing this? Most websites with a large amount of data attempt to organize the data into pages to be indexed by search engines. For example websites that are related to local businesses in some way, such as hotels or restaurants. These websites will often not only have a landing page for each hotel and restaurant, but also organize the data into listing-style subsets, such as “restaurants in New York” or “hotels near Notting Hill, London” - using the same data but creating unique pages with unique titles and capturing more long tail search engine traffic.

How can I implement this? Think about how your data can be grouped into subsets to create more search engine landing pages, for example categories, locales, prices etc.

Notes

Simply creating hundreds of automatically generated pages is most likely a recipe for getting penalized by Google. Try to include original content on each of these auto-generated pages. For example in the case of a hotel website,

generating 100 pages that simply list your data for “Hotels in Bangkok”, “Hotels in Paris” etc is likely to incur a penalty or at the least not rank highly. However, including an original paragraph of text for each location (for example, a primer or review of the location’s tourist attractions) is likely to be viewed as positive by search engines. In general there is no short cut to high search engine rankings - the key is to simply try to maximize value and utility to the end user.

85. The Celebrity Endorsement Hack

What is this? Engage a celebrity or blogger to endorse your product e.g. talk about it on their blog, make a youtube video for it or be seen with the product on Instagram etc.

Why should I do this? This can result in wide exposure, but in a cheaper and more controllable manner than using display ads. It is also a form of social proof that can have utility even after the engagement has ended.

Who else is doing this? Countries with a developed blogger ecosystem generally have paid placement programs in place. For example in Japan, major bloggers are managed by blogger agencies who broker paid coverage. Coverage generally comes with a guarantee of page views and clients can proofread/edit content before it goes live.

How can I implement this? Talk with a blogger agency operating in the market you want to target.

Notes

Although this is a form of paid advertising, it can be unpredictably awesome. In a previous company we were running a sale on fancy frying pans (our business was luxury flash sales). For a cost not-to-be sneezed at, we engaged with a celebrity blogger known for her passion for cooking and she posted about our sale. We crossed our fingers. The ROI was good. Then, quite unexpectedly a friend of the blogger who happened to be a celebrity chef (who was not offered to us at our budget), saw the post and also posted on her own blog about the sale, simply because she loved the brand of frying pan. The ROI went from good to excellent.

86. The Bundle Hack

What is this? Partner up and distribute your product as a package, with other products.

Why should I do this? Packages or “bundles” are often discounted which can incentivize users to purchase. The company providing the bundle generally handles the marketing, by way of their mailing list or other distribution channels. Successful participants in a bundle will offset the discounted price for their product (a cost of acquisition) with the long-term lifetime value of the new customer.

Who else is doing this? Moz, Sendgrid and Visual Website Optimizer are just a few SaaS companies who participated in the Growth Hacker Bundle, a discounted bundle of business software. World of Goo, Braid and Super Meat Boy are a few famous indie games that have participated in the Humble Indie Bundle, a highly popular discounted bundle of indie games.

How can I implement this? You can work with a product that specializes in bundling, or you can partner up and create a bundle yourself - although by doing this you take on the responsibility of marketing the bundle.

87. The Dummy Content Hack

What is this? When a new user signs up for your product, typically they will have not yet created content meaning their profile page or dashboard etc is empty. Instead of showing new users an empty page, show them a page filled with dummy or example content.

Why should I do this? Seeing the product in action - even with just dummy or example content - can help users to understand the value proposition faster. It can also provide a subtle motivation for the user to overwrite the example content with their own.

Who else is doing this? Subscription billing software Chargebee populates new accounts with test data (that can be deleted) to show new users what it looks like when an account has billings, customers, monthly revenue reports etc.

How can I implement this? A simple way to implement this is with a graphic. In its early days Basecamp used a static graphic to show a user what example content would look like (with an EXAMPLE watermark overlaid on top). Basecamp has since migrated to the test data-style of onboarding.

88. The Free Template Hack

What is this? Offer a downloadable tool or template for users to download free and use.

Why should I do this? Potential customers are often searching for free templates. For example, if you make invoice software your potential customers might be doing google searches for “free invoice templates”. Getting on the search result pages for these queries can help you get discovered by the right audience.

Who else is doing this? Time tracking software Harvest is on the first Google search result page for “free invoice template”, along with many other related companies. None of the companies are in the business of selling free invoice templates, it is simply an act of goodwill and a chance to appear on the SERP for potentially relevant customers.

How can I implement this? Think about your potential customer’s workflow or business activities and what can be packaged into a template. Then put this on your site as a free PDF (or excel etc) download.

89. The Register to Save Hack

What is this? Instead of getting users to sign up in order to use a product, only ask users for their email *after* they have gone through some steps to create a piece of content or perform a task.

Why should I do this? Encouraging a user to try your product openly, can make the eventual conversion to signup easier. This may be for a variety of reasons such as:

- The user understands your value proposition better
- The user wants to save their progress by creating an account
- The user needs to be sent something (e.g. a report)

Who else is doing this? Beauty box company Julep gets new users to fill out a visual style quiz (skin type, product preferences) before asking for an email address to receive the results. This pattern is seen often in products that require profiling of users, for example beauty, fashion and dating.

How can I implement this? Try to think of a creative, fun way for users to experience your product, before asking them for their email address. This can apply for products based on:

- Searches e.g. property search websites. Allow users to freely search, then require email for saving of multiple search parameters.
- Content creation e.g. blog platforms. Allow users to freely create content until the point they want to save or publish, which requires an email.

- Profiling e.g. dating websites. Allow users to take a quiz to find out more about themselves but only offer the results via email.

90. The Event Hack

What is this? Host an offline event with a theme relevant to your customers.

Why should I do this? Offline events are good for establishing thought leadership in a particular space. Offline events can also create a flurry of social media activity that can introduce new prospects to your site, well beyond the scope of just the offline participants. Also remember that offline events do not have to be free - they can require paid participation, meaning that basic costs can be covered up front.

Who else is doing this? Startup events happen all the time, often with startups organizing or sponsoring for some exposure.

How can I implement this? The practical advice here is similar to that of the conference talk tactic. Establish sharing mechanisms like hashtags upfront, and optimize your presentations for social sharing by including soundbites or useful data.

91. The Responsive Design Hack

What is this? Design your landing pages in such a way that they scale gracefully down for mobile devices.

Why should I do this? Your potential customers are not all using a desktop computer. Particularly if a user shares your product with their social network, a large percentage of clickthroughs will be from mobile devices. Making sure the reading experience and subsequent call to actions are clear to all users will have a positive effect on your conversion rate.

Who else is doing this? Squarespace has an attractive, responsive landing page that scales down nicely for mobile devices.

How can I implement this? Responsive design uses CSS features like *media queries* to tell browsers how to display content at different screen sizes. Most responsive designs are achieved through a creative mix of CSS and some javascript.

Notes

As with all things on the web, there exists an opposing viewpoint. Some designers believe it is best to keep the design consistent on all devices and simply let mobile users zoom in and out, since they are accustomed to do this anyway.

92. The Widget Hack

What is this? Add an embeddable widget to your product, allowing users to easily add your content to their own websites or blogs.

Why should I do this? Any time a user adds your content to their blog it is a chance to indirectly advertise on that user's blog. For example your content can be watermarked or simply have a link back to your product. In this way, having an embeddable widget is a way of reaching an exponentially wider audience.

Who else is doing this? The most famous example of this is YouTube. YouTube pioneered the use of an embeddable video widget which quickly became the de facto standard for displaying video content on a personal blog, as well as helping YouTube to advertise itself. Social media platforms also have embeddable widgets such as sharing buttons. These give website owners increased functionality without the need for coding skills, while at the same time helping to promote the platforms and increase social sharing activity.

How can I implement this? Look for areas where you can enhance a user's blog using your content somehow. YouTube was popular for this because before YouTube, embedding video on a blog was difficult. Social sharing buttons are popular because they help the 3rd party blog get shared, and therefore more page views. Any embeddable widget should primarily enhance the functionality of the 3rd party website it is being embedded on, and secondarily promote your product.

93. The Free Tool Hack

What is this? Build a free tool that offers some related functionality to your main product offering.

Why should I do this? Giving away a free tool can be a good way of acquiring prospective customers especially if the markets are highly relevant to each other. A typical way is by requiring an email address to use the free tool, and then adding this email address to a marketing mailing list in order to upsell to the paid product at a later date. Or even without directly upselling, the free tool gives the prospective customer some exposure to the brand and strengthens thought leadership in the market.

Who else is doing this? In the early days, 37signals offered todo list software Tadalist as a completely free app, which in turn gave users exposure to the 37signals brand and philosophy on simple, elegant software. SEO software company Moz gives away a number of free analytical tools such as twitter follower analytics and a website analyzer.

How can I implement this? Building another tool is one of the more extreme forms of growth hacking, since it requires creating a whole new product - which means brainstorming, designing, engineering and marketing resources. In other words it is like running a mini startup within a startup and perhaps best suited only to teams that can spare the engineering resources. To maximize your direct returns from the free tool, think about how you can capture a user's email address. While some users may be reluctant to give their email address for a simple, free tool you can justify it in a few different ways:

- In order to create an account to save their progress

- In order to send them some kind of output (e.g. a report) that takes time to generate
- In order to get additional features

94. The Turbo Hack

What is this? Increase the speed of your site in various ways.

Why should I do this? Site speed is directly correlated to activity and conversions on your site. Having a fast site means more conversions. More people will sign up, more people will use your product. Having a slow site means more people will get frustrated and leave, even if they were interested in what you had to offer.

Who else is doing this? Walmart performed tests on their ecommerce site and found that for every 1 second of improvement they experienced up to a 2% increase in conversions. Amazon performed similar tests, with similar results. Site speed is particularly important for ecommerce but also for SaaS and social apps.

How can I implement this? Site speed is not an easy thing to tune, but there are some quick wins. At a basic level you can combine and minimize your CSS and Javascript, which results in fewer and faster downloads for your users. Then you can offload serving of all your static files (CSS, Javascript, images, media) to a Content Delivery Network (CDN) which will free up your own server resources as well as deliver content faster to your users. These two steps are fairly simple but will result in a noticeable speed increase. Beyond this, increasing speed gets more technically involved.

95. The UGC Hack

What is this? Create a feature on your product that allows users to create and share their own content (User Generated Content).

Why should I do this? Creating content yourself does not scale well. But allowing people to create content for you means content can scale exponentially. More authors and more content means more sharing and more traffic to your platform.

Who else is doing this? BuzzFeed regularly sources content from its own users for “community posts” - full articles that feature only crowdsourced content.

How can I implement this? If you are running a Wordpress blog you already have the capability for multiple authors with an approval workflow. Invite users to sign up as an author for your blog. Or create a forum or other space where a community can foster, allowing you to cherry-pick and feature the best content on your blog.

96. The Affiliate Program Hack

What is this? Recruit people who will drive new customers to you for a share of revenue.

Why should I do this? Affiliate programs are a classic growth tactic and are a little like having an outsourced sales force. An affiliate program is different from a basic two way reward in a few ways:

- Commissions / rewards are generally higher meaning that participants have a stronger motivation to refer customers.
- While a 2-way reward might be offered to all users of a platform, participation in an affiliate program is often limited to a smaller group of people.
- There is generally an expectation of participants to do more than casual sharing among friends, including but not limited to creating original content, business development and forming their own partnerships in order to refer sales.

A well-run affiliate program can help you access previously inaccessible markets. For example, break into a geographic location where you do not have the resources or knowhow to sell in that language or culture, but a participant in your affiliate program does.

Who else is doing this? Affiliate programs are found all over the web. Mature SaaS companies like Salesforce operate affiliate programs and pay commissions on either all recurring revenue or the first year of revenue.

How can I implement this? Software exists to manage affiliate tracking and commission payments. The success of an affiliate program will depend on

your ability to attract high quality affiliates, and also by providing them with resources and tools in order to help them sell.

97. The Fun Hack

What is this? Add “fun” elements to your UX.

Why should I do this? It is difficult to say what makes a product get great word of mouth referrals. Solving a problem elegantly is the first challenge. But beyond this it comes down to the user experience - the better the user experience, the more memorable the product becomes and this can fuel word of mouth. One way to optimize for great UX is to make it delightful, or fun.

Who else is doing this? The app world is full of examples of companies going the extra mile to create a delightful experience for users. Path’s popout menu was so popular that it was copied and open sourced. Twitter acquired Tweetie, a popular twitter client that was the first app to implement the now-ubiquitous pull-to-refresh feature. This design pattern was loved so much by users that it was copied by many other apps.

How can I implement this? While it is difficult to come up with entirely new design patterns such as pull-to-refresh, optimizing common design patterns can improve the UX in your product. For example:

- Speed up animations. Faster animations (e.g. activity spinners) give the impression to the user that the action is happening faster.
- Animate in and out, instead of having new items appear out of nowhere.
- Avoid UI blocking. This is where a button or an entire app becomes disabled while waiting for a remote response.

98. The Liberal Interpretation of the Rules Hack

What is this? In the early stages of the company, startups often interpret the law loosely. For example knowingly hosting copyrighted content or violating the terms of use of larger companies.

Why should I do this? Not playing by the rules can give you some major advantages such as reach and distribution.

Who else is doing this? AirBNB famously built a publish-to-Craigslist feature giving them a huge push in distribution, but was in fact a violation of Craigslist's terms of use and was later disabled. In the early days of YouTube, copyright law was observed loosely and many users flocked to the site to view copyrighted materials (movies, TV shows, music videos). This content was then either later removed, or copyright owners recognized the paradigm shift and the destination that YouTube had become and simply allowed the infringement to take place as a cost of doing business.

How can I implement this? History has shown us that while you're small, take advantage of that fact and do not sweat the rules too much. Note, this is merely an observation, not a recommendation!

99. The Integration Partner Hack

What is this? Integrate your app with another app via their API, and get listed on their site as an integration partner.

Why should I do this? Getting listed on a major partner's integration page can give a boost in direct traffic as well as add to your social proof. Apart from that, your users get extended functionality through the integration and your integration partner gets another partner which is great for their social proof too.

Who else is doing this? Most mature SaaS platforms with an API list their integration partners. For example Freshbooks has a page of Add-ons (3rd party integrations), with logos and links to each partner.

How can I implement this? Choose a partner based on the utility your users would receive plus how good their distribution is. The ideal partner has wide distribution, has a prominent 3rd party integrations listing page that they can list you on, and is not too large of a company such that they may have too many integrators to accept new submissions to the listing page.

Notes

You can also write up the integration (why, how, what you learned, results) as either a case study or a blog post which will add to your social proof and in general makes for effective content marketing.

100. The White Label Hack

What is this? White label your platform and offer it to other businesses as a product they can sell as their own.

Why should I do this? Partnering with other businesses in this way can give you access to markets that were unreachable or expensive to reach alone. If your goal is to grow revenue, a revenue share agreement with a partner for a white labeled version of your platform can be an effective tactic.

Who else is doing this? Much of the VPS industry is fueled by reseller activity. The commodity nature of VPS infrastructure means that consumer behavior is influenced not by the infrastructure itself but the marketing, service package, software layers etc added on top, which resellers provide in order to target their own niche markets.

How can I implement this? There are many ways to white label and the topic is complex. From a maintenance perspective the easiest form of white labeling is hosted white labeling, where customers go to your partners site or app - but in fact the product is being run from the same servers that power your own product. This means that updates or bug fixes only need to be deployed to one set of servers as opposed to across all your partner servers individually.

Notes

At a previous fashion ecommerce company I was CTO at, we put an unbranded version of our store on a popular fashion magazine's site with a revenue share partnership - this turned out to be the source of many of our best customers in terms of repeat purchases.

Thanks

The Growth Hacking Handbook was crowdfunded in a [successful campaign](#) raising over \$12,000 before the book was published. A huge THANK YOU goes out to the enthusiastic marketers, entrepreneurs and startup folks who preordered the book!

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