Top 10 Social Marketing Tips

For marketers, making friends online is all about influencing them down the road and having them influence their friends. When social is done right and it pays off, it can be huge. It all starts with creating something that people want to associate themselves with — something they want to be a part of — something they're willing to vouch for, represent, and pass on.

At ion, we live for seducible moments — times at which the people we market to are most open to our ideas and solutions. Social marketing starts by moving people to their first seducible moment with you — the one where they're willing to vouch for something related to your organization. How will you earn their endorsements? And how will you then turn that affinity into business?

1. Be Specific

People attend to things that are relevant to them. When we put specific content out there to address specific needs, it's likely to get traction. Irrelevance is a lonely, friendless, follower-free place where no company can afford to languish. Today's accessible avalanche of content makes it too easy to search, skim and scurry. You won't make relevant friends without relevant content to capture their attention, imagination and interest.

2. Be Valuable

Ours is a user-centered view of social marketing. Value is in the eye of the beholder, not the marketer. We constantly put ourselves in the user's shoes and ask ourselves what it would take for that person to love us. Yes, love is the right word. Passion might be an even better one. Gimmicky follower vacuums will attract gimmick-loving followers. If that's psychographically who you believe has real business value to your organization, than by all means go gimmicky. For everyone else, establish real value in your exchange for affinity. Ask yourself what it is that you have that is highly valuable to your prospects. People want to pass value onto others. It makes them more valuable. Look for things that make you uncomfortable — they're often the strongest ideas.

3. Be Memorable

Most of the time, it's not enough to be specific and valuable. You have to be interesting too. No matter what the monotone guy says, all we hear is blah, blah, blah. Be bold, be funny, maybe a bit controversial — be human. People like other people that cut through the monotony. Very few people want to introduce their friends to the intensely ordinary, boring guy. Now, what was his name again?

4. Be Selfless

It's not about you. It's not about you. It's not about you. You're not making friends and influencing people because you're so great. Social will work for you, if you work for it. That means delivering real value even when it's not directly in your best interest to do so. You're looking for others to pass the good word about you and your brand to others, and those others to do the same. Multiply that out and you have a lot more others and a lot less you.

5. Be Convenient

Right place, right time, right idea... When you create your socially seducible moment, you damn well better put one-click tools at your users' fingertips. Make it easy to be your friend, to like your post, to follow your brand or to fan your page. Make it

obvious how to comment, share, re-post, embed, invite or subscribe. Make it a pleasure to interact with you socially — anything less leads to loneliness.

6. Be True

Bad news travels fast(er than good news). There are spammy possibilities in every social vehicle. Stoop to that level and you're sure to invite online social hellfire and damnation faster than you can say 'unfollow'. It's just not worth it. If you're in a real business, to attract real customers, then dishonest tactics or misleading practices will negatively impact your brand and ultimately your sales. Everyone knows everything. Remember that and be true.

7. Be Smart

So far, our first six tips have focused on becoming more social. But how do you know if all of that effort is actually worth it? That brings us to being smart about all this stuff. It's not enough to simply attract fans if you don't nurture those fans to escalate their relationship with your offering. If you consider social engagement to be a conversion — the first step towards seeing real business value — then you can track the sources of your social conversions against revenue (using social landing pages). Those social engagements that are the result of more organic socialization, are harder to track. But, as you nurture everyone in your social universe, you can drop trackable crumbs, and create incremental conversion events that make things much more measurable.

8. Be Consistent

Timing is everything. Banking on random strokes of luck — that our prospects are ready when we think they should be — is a strategy destined for failure. Better to be there all the time. That means having a consistent presence and mindshare with your fans, followers and friends. You need to be on their virtual radar all the time. And for all the right reasons. Mix in just enough commercial reminders (not spam) to keep your purpose top of mind for them. Just as your messaging won't make you friends if it's irrelevant, your conversations won't make you sales if they're unrelated to what you're selling. Stay consistently on mission and when they're ready, make it easy for them to raise their hand and escalate the relationship.

9. Be Persistent

Frequency in social marketing is a bit like brainwashing. What you put out there via Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn needs to be guided and coordinated by strategy. When there's a plan that includes messages and adequate frequency for each of those messages — both within and across social vehicles — you can achieve awareness and recall that are so important for both branding and sales. When a social messaging plan is nonexistent, the haphazard nature of the resulting communication is inefficient and in some cases damaging. Put a relatively small number of core messages in your plan and be persistent in their dissemination. This emphasis on frequency will give your message a life of its own.

10. Be Patient

Social conversion is a form of lead generation. It's basically an effort to build a list or lists — housed by third parties like Twitter and Facebook — for a relatively new form of nurturing. Warming any house list takes time, energy and a plan. Social warming is no different. You need a warming program that moves your followers closer and closer to you, so that when they're ready for your solution, they think of you and not your competitor. All of this requires patience.

So how do you know if social conversion is right for your organization? And how do you get started? Building engaged communities of passionate fans is right for almost any organization. And getting started is simple. Put social triggers in convenient, close proximity to your most valuable, specific and memorable content. Create trackable social landing pages for your Twitter or Facebook links and be as specific as possible with who those pages speak to.

7 Reasons for Social Networking on Landing Pages

For several years, we've been advocating a Long Tail strategy for landing pages. In our experience, one of the keys to highly successful post-click marketing is to have distinct landing experiences assigned to each of your niche marketing campaigns.

Eschew generic, one-size-fits-all landing pages. Get specific.

The reason this works is straightforward: people respond better — much better — to content and offers that speak directly and authentically to their particular wants, needs, interests. When Long Tail ads are matched with Long Tail landing pages, you engage these niches in more relevant dialogues right from the start, framed from their perspective. The result is a higher conversion rate.

Recently, we had an epiphany: the targeted audiences of Long Tail landing pages could unleash tremendous value and synergy if they could connect with each other, à la social networking.

Social networking on landing pages could serve as a gateway to unique Long Tail market communities.

By executing a Long Tail marketing strategy, you as the marketer are already doing the heavy lifting of finding a particular audience, placing ads to win their clicks, and launching niche-specific landing pages as a destination for them. You are assembling congregations of people bound by specialized, shared interests.

All you have to do is tear down the paper walls between them.

Instead of simply communicating with them one-on-one, you can — at your discretion and theirs — introduce them to each other. In the language of The Tipping Point, your niche-specific landing page can become a kind of "connector", bringing together people who — despite a particular shared interest — may have had a difficult time finding each other elsewhere in the social web.

Take for example our case study on Citrix, who successfully used Long Tail landing pages to promote their remote application software to the health care industry. They launched landing pages specifically aimed at hospital IT administrators, and then further segmented them by large hospital or small hospital environments.

Now, if you're a small hospital IT administrator, grappling with HIPAA-compliance issues on your software infrastructure, would it be helpful for you to get in touch with other small hospital IT administrators wrestling with the same challenges?

Absolutely.

Not just to vet, ratify, or extend the specific presentation being made by Citrix — although that unto itself is immediately valuable as a core benefit. But also to discuss broader issues that surround such a decision, like financing, training, legacy support, legal implications, and so on. And even beyond that particular topic, such a peer group remains an ongoing resource for advice, suggestions, references, and more.

Companies can deliver enormous value to their market by serving as the nexus by which their customers discover their professional counterparts and kindred spirits.

But why should you do this? And how?

The how is easy. Recent announcements of Friend Connect by Google, Facebook Connect by Facebook, and Data Availability by MySpace have unveiled a wave of new widgets that can be plugged into any web page to interface with people's existing

social networks. According to Google's announcement, "Web sites that are not social networks may still want to be social. Friend Connect provides you the ability to add social features to your site, without writing code."

All you need to do is cut-and-paste these widgets in your landing pages. (In the case of LiveBall, our latest release makes it a breeze to drop widgets into the flow of designer-created templates that adhere to your brand standards.)

What's great about these widgets from Google, Facebook, and MySpace is that they leverage respondents' existing social network accounts, friends, and profiles — in a two-way exchange that is centered around your page and its specific content and purpose. Any social features you put on the page, such as discussion threads, reviews, and recommendations need not be isolated pools of social interaction — such as comments on a blog — but rather tributaries to larger streams and rivers in people's broader social networks.

As for why you should do this, here are 7 reasons to consider adding social networking features to your landing pages:

1. Because niche-specific social networking can deliver value to your respondents, they will be inclined to view your brand more favorably in light of the beneficial connections you've enabled for them. Reciprocity is a good thing.

2. Engaging respondents immediately after they click on an ad is one of the toughest challenges in post-click marketing. Social interactivity — particularly if it has a low hurdle and promising upside — can be an effective hook to pull people into active participation with your marketing campaign.

3. Participants' social networks become a vehicle for additional referral traffic, as they share their discovery and related conversation with other potential prospects in their sphere of influence. This can be a force multiplier on your original advertising spend.

4. Social landing pages can also serve as your invitation into prospects' social networks, a channel to develop relationships that can persist beyond the immediate topic.

5. Particularly when people are exploring new purchases or services — which is typically how they arrive in one of your marketing campaigns — they find it reassuring to be able to talk with others in their shoes. Helping respondents help each other in this context can further your agenda.

6. Your willingness to facilitate open discussions between your prospects and customers radiates a strong position of confidence, signaling that you genuinely believe in what you do and are eager to talk about it and have others talk about it.

7. Social interactions on your landing page are an excellent way for you to get real-time, qualitative feedback. Statistics such as bounce rates, conversion rate, segmentation, etc., show quantitative response, but social media mechanisms let you hear first-hand what people are thinking — even people who might not "convert" (which may be some of the most valuable feedback of all).

To be sure, social networking may not be effective on every landing page. It very much depends on your campaign, your company, and the particular niche you're trying to engage. In some cases, social features can significantly enhance the experience — as described above. In other scenarios, they may be a distraction.

The best way to find out is to test.

One of the great things about landing pages is that they are relatively low-risk propositions that are fast and easy to change — far less inertia than your primary web site. You can test new ideas like this quickly and painlessly. If it works, awesome,

expand the idea further. If it doesn't, your exposure was small, you learn from it, and try another variation or something entirely different.

Particularly given the wide spectrum of social applications and interfaces — with new, innovative ones appearing every week — this is a category of online marketing ideas that can be deeply mined for a long time to come.

In fact, beyond serving as an enhancement to content-oriented or offer-oriented landing pages, we expect to see Long Tail campaigns that drive traffic to pure social networking-oriented landing pages. In those cases, the "conversion" goal won't be a lead or a transaction, but rather a social interaction — friending or following the company, contributing to a discussion, adding a review, making a referral, etc.

A new generation of widgets that combine social APIs from Facebook, Google, and MySpace with APIs from landing page management systems such as LiveBall for segmenting, grading, and converting respondents will enable marketers to measure the social networking factors of their Long Tail marketing campaigns.

At some point along the way, social media marketing blends with direct marketing. We think that's going to be awesome for marketers and respondents alike.

Why 'Social Conversion' Is A Term You Should Know

Social Distortion rocked. Social studies didn't. Social anxiety is as common as acne. And social conversion is the term online marketers need to know. Why? Because online marketing conversion as we know it today is unlikely to survive as a successful long-term tactic.

A few years ago, online marketers overvalued the click. Now, more and more, people have seen the light and understand that the click is not the reason we market. But we still seem to overvalue single transactions or events. We're still not focused on the end game—increasing our revenue.

No matter how high your conversion rate is, it is probably limited to a single event. Big deal. Wouldn't you rather invest the same spend and get a string of events in return? Wouldn't you prefer to trade that expensive dinner for a relationship rather than a one-night stand? (Some of you social deviants answered "no" to that one, I know.)

Take a fresh look at your online marketing and visualize it leading to not one event, but to many events strung together into a relationship. This relationship is much more permanent and pervasive than even the most perfectly honed lead or transaction. With this mutual engagement you establish a new level of branding-based on shared interests and conversations.

Big Picture

This relationship starts with a handshake. That handshake is the new conversion. And it happens on high-powered social landing pages. These landing pages come after your paid search, email or advertising and culminate in targeted, social engagement—rather than a lead-gen form or single transaction. You guide your respondents to participate in highly segmented social vehicles—self-serving to both your mission and to their needs.

Now don't start thinking I am advocating this handshake as some kind of vague conversion black hole. Every bit of this should be measurable and accountable. The frequency of engagement taken against your click-through-rate is your conversion rate and the depth of engagement shows your relative conversion quality. Said another way, you want to track how many people are engaging and what they are doing after they engage. Then you want to track everything back to where they came from. And then track it all back to sales.

Leveraging the Social Vehicles You Already Have

What makes this so exciting is that most of us have social networking vehicles already in place. And most of us are struggling to leverage them to truly improve our bottom lines. Thanks to widgets like Google Friend Connect and Facebook Connect you can promote and feed those existing vehicles using your online marketing. Take that niche Facebook group and pour 500 new members with shared interests right into it. Watch them start talking--all about you and what you offer. The possibilities are stunningly real and immediate.

Think Outside the box, too

Using widgets, it's become super easy to enhance landing pages with small social features like picture posts, discussions and microblogs. For example, one of the things we've begun doing is socializing our white papers. Now, when a respondent receives one of our white papers, it includes buttons (on the pages of the white paper). These buttons allow readers to deepen their engagement with us by posting questions to the author or discussing the white paper with peers. We even track which pages of the white paper stimulate the most interest-which gives us valuable messaging insight.

The people who participate at this level are passionate about the subject matter and of very high value to us. Engaging with them on a common ground—within the context of our brand and ideals—brings them into an inner circle that could never be realized with a standard landing page or Web site. No manner of stimulating a single event can come close to matching the trust and enthusiasm of an exchange.

We are all (hopefully) experts on something. It can be something as simple as a basic product or as far reaching as global politics. Either way, the most compelling form of marketing is one that establishes a rapport between our organization's expertise and those who care. Using online marketing to identify those who care is step one—segmentation. Making the connection using social conversion is step two. As long as we participate, then once the conduit is open, we're home free. Social conversion has a lot more legs than any single event. Believe it. Prove it. Make it happen.

Be a Social Marketing Innovator with LiveBall

Measurable social media marketing is here. And you can get started socializing your landing pages right now.

With our support for widget-enhanced landing pages in LiveBall, you can add custom social networking features to your paths. And with the release of Facebook Connect & Google's Friend Connect, you ca also integrate their respective social networking services into your LiveBall paths.

Depending upon the nature of your product, service, or offering, social landing pages could provide a significant boost to the overall potency of your online marketing efforts. While social landing pages may not be right for everyone, consider these 7 benefits of adding social networking features onto your paths:

1. increased brand equity with respondents who value the social networking connections with their niche-specific peers that the company has enabled;

2. a reduced "bounce rate" on campaign landing pages as social interactivity engages more participants than static content;

3. additional traffic via referrals through respondents' social networks;

4. invitations into respondents' social networks to develop threads beyond the campaign;

5. the ability for respondents to interact with one another to provide peer support;

6. a strong signal to respondents that the company has enough confidence in itself to facilitate open discussions around the campaign;

7. an excellent stream of qualitative feedback—even from respondents who may not "convert" — to balance quantitative stats such as bounce rate and conversion rate.

For example, within our own marketing, we added a comments feature to our Landing Pages 2.0 Webinar registration thank you page. The end result? We averaged a 55% conversion rate, and over 5% of registrants immediately engaged with us post-conversion, providing feedback on what webinar topics they were interested in. It was the first time we integrated social features into our paths, and the experiment was an astounding success. It provided:

1. an incentive for respondents to convert

2. an opportunity to engage with the webinar host post-conversion

3. immediate, qualitative feedback on our webinar registration process

4. suggestions on relevant topics to cover

Where to begin

Social features can be applied to your landing pages, microsites and conversion paths both pre- and post-conversion. Pre-conversion social features provide assurance and brand equity to respondents, and post-conversion social features can often be an incentive to convert.

Or try this: the social conversion. Word of mouth and social media marketing is powerful, potent, and gets results. Start measuring social engagement with social networking on your paths. Instead of having respondents convert in the traditional sense (purchase, lead, sign-up), provide them the opportunity to engage with your brand. Give them the opportunity to join your Facebook group, or follow you on Twitter. That social connection could very well result in many more traditional online and offline conversions in the future.

LiveBall optimizes the performance of online campaigns by delivering ideal user experiences. It significantly reduces the resources required to manage long-tail content and optimize conversions.

As a direct result of using LiveBall, customers see significant increases in revenue and profit.

▶ American Greetings reduced its cost-per-acquisition by 20% in three months.

▶ Bronto Software increased its lead-gen conversion rate from 2% to 18% in five months.

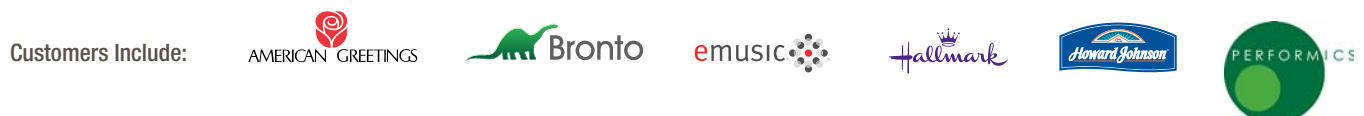▶ Citrix Systems increased its search engine conversion rate from 0.5% to 12% in three weeks.

Optimizing the gap between ads and results

LiveBall optimizes the gap between online ads — search, email, mobile, social, display — and results. It creates the first impressions a brand makes on users. By determining a user's intent and then focusing on it, LiveBall significantly increases user satisfaction. That satisfaction translates into more engagement, more leads and more revenue.

Social
Mobile
Search → **Live**Ball → Cart/Checkout
Email → CRM
Display → Mktg. Automation
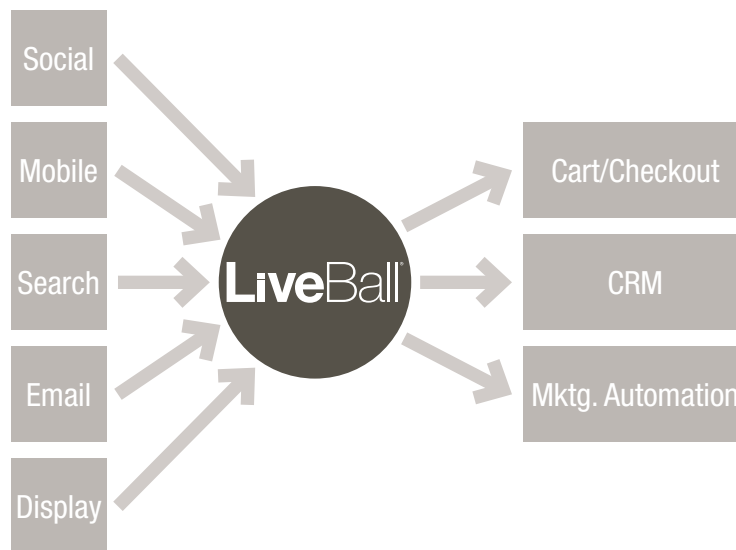
Putting marketing in control

LiveBall is technology for marketers. It's a whole new class of easy-to-use software that saves resources, increases agility and improves results. It's IT independent — putting marketing in control of campaigns from beginning to end. LiveBall is cloud based — making it quick to launch and maintenance free. To use it, marketers log-in with a web browser. And for all the enterprise features of the platform, training takes less than two hours. It's low overhead and high impact.

Customers Include: AMERICAN GREETINGS   Bronto   emusic   Hallmark   Howard Johnson   PERFORMICS

LiveBall® The most complete conversion optimization platform.

LiveBall gives marketers the power & freedom to execute.

For marketers. By marketers.

Just point, click and change it. Change what? Everything — forms, text, images, Flash, links, brands, page layouts, SEO controls — you name it. All IT free.

Testing without code or IT

Test it all. LiveBall brings sophisticated testing into the 'no-code zone'. Launch A/B or MVT in three easy clicks.

Industry-leading forms

LiveBall includes an agile, flexible, sophisticated no-code forms engine. Make pain-free, world-class forms all by yourself.

Unparalleled SEO features

Nine ground-breaking features that make LiveBall the most search-friendly landing page platform.

Clear, actionable reporting

Effortlessly get meaningful, real-time reports as HTML, PDF or Excel XLS and automatically send them to colleagues.

Mobile optimization

Every user deserves an ideal experience. LiveBall keeps that promise by optimizing for the latest mobile devices.

Flexible, branded templates

'Template' is no longer a dirty word — not even in the most creative circles. LiveBall includes a proven set of flexible templates, custom-branded for you.

Flexible conditional logic

Design your own if/then statements for advanced logic — trigger actions from 31 different conditions — code-free.

Asset management

LiveBall centralizes images, Flash, fulfillment, forms, email responders, tags and templates, so it's easy to reuse them.

Seamless data sharing

Export to Salesforce.com, post to a form, send email, a delimited or vCard file — LiveBall gets your data where you need it.

Flexible open integration

LiveBall customers mix and match components in their own loosely coupled architecture to attain best-of-breed status in each key sales & marketing area.

LiveBall usability

LiveBall gets out of your way — saving you time & resources at every step. Even the training is short and simple.

LiveBall is cloud-based and IT free.

Cloud-based software is reliable, easy to buy and easy to live with. With LiveBall, you simply order your solution, we provision it and get you started, you just log in and use it. You pay based only on the number of unique visitors you send to the platform.

Content management — make all the pages you want
Testing — three clicks for powerful A/B testing
Reporting — real-time analytics at your fingertips
Hosting — go live in minutes
Support — high-touch service from nice people
Users — everyone in your company can use it
Quick start — everything you need to get started fast

Unlimited seats — everyone can use LiveBall
Unlimited pages — create and launch all the pages you want
Unlimited visits — multiple visits from a unique count as one
Unlimited testing — run all of the code-free tests you want
Unlimited support — via phone & email — for one user

Customers Include: AMERICAN GREETINGS   Bronto   emusic   Hallmark   Howard Johnson   PERFORMICS