

2nd
Annual

THE CMO'S GUIDE TO: THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

CMOs will invest more in social media this year than ever before, yet this is a scene that constantly shifts and changes. Here to help you better leverage these major social media sites is CMO.com's 2nd annual guide to the social landscape—updated and revised for 2011.

GOOD!

OKAY!

BAD!

WEB SITE

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

BRAND EXPOSURE

TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE

SEO

facebook

A social-networking site where users can add friends, send messages, and build their own profiles

A central and open communication portal, Facebook is the hub through which businesses want to drive social interaction. Positive or negative, companies can use Facebook to get their messages out and to receive customer feedback.

Using pages as a persona allows companies to position their brands on other relevant pages. For example, Starbucks' page itself can now post on large coffee-lovers' pages.

For many Web sites, Facebook has emerged as one of the top traffic sources. While the "viral potential" is lower on Facebook than others, nothing is more consistent at driving a steady flow of traffic to every message or post.

Google and Bing have both indicated that they are using "social signals" as part of their ranking algorithms, pointing to Facebook and Twitter, in particular. While the links themselves are "nofollow," the search benefits exist, especially in instances where "Query Deserves Freshness."

twitter

A microblogging site that enables users to send "tweets," or messages of 140 characters or less

Twitter is the ultimate outbound messaging tool. Inbound customer communications are quick and to the point, allowing for simple monitoring and management of conversations.

It isn't what you're saying on Twitter that exposes your brand. It's what you can get others to say about you that has the real impact. Getting retweets and interactions can do more for brand exposure than any other social site.

The prevalence of noise and spam have reduced Twitter's ability to send direct traffic. However, it is an exceptional tool for assisting with traffic generation from other sites, like Digg, StumbleUpon, and Facebook.

As with Facebook, Twitter has been singled out as a component of Google's and Bing's social component. The links are "nofollow," but the social component is real and expected to become more prominent over time.

flickr

An image-and video- hosting Web site where community members can share and comment on media

As a PR tool, Flickr gives company-sponsored events a pictorial home that can be more professional and better organized than on other social image- sharing sites (including Facebook).

Flickr's improved search rankings and integration with other social sites makes it the high-quality image posting service of choice. Bulk images should go on Facebook. Quality images should go on Flickr.

Even if you get tens of thousands of visits to a photo with your URL hyperlinked below, the click-through rates are among the lowest around. All links are "nofollow."

Flickr is very much indexed in search engines and passes links and page rank. It is also a major part of Google's and Bing's social search component—photos liked by individuals can be seen more prevalently in their friends' searches.

Linked in

A social-networking site for business professionals

Not the primary focus, but you can potentially engage customers by encouraging employees to answer industry-related questions people post and become known as an expert in the field.

LinkedIn is great for personal branding and showing the professional prowess in your organization. Encourage employees to maintain complete profiles to show off your solid team.

LinkedIn continues to improve its standing in traffic generation by encouraging sharing through every new feature it has rolled out during the past year. It isn't as consistent as Facebook or as viral as Digg, but it's getting better.

Very high page rank, almost guaranteed to be a ranking on the first page of search results, especially for your individual employee names. High SEO value for vanity search for your name, but that is about it.

YouTube

A video-sharing Web site where users can share and upload new videos

Whether you seek to entertain, inform, or both, video is a powerful channel for quickly responding to customer complaints and showing your social-media savvy. It is also the best venue for reputation "repair" if things go wrong.

Your YouTube branding is second only to Facebook when people are researching your company. Be certain that the messages are frequent and that they align with what you want as your perceived company persona.

YouTube is growing in the traffic-generation segment, particularly through in-video messaging through annotations and URL branding. Clicks on content links are still minimal, but even those numbers have seen a recent rise.

Very good for building links back to your site because the videos rank very well. YouTube channels are a tried-and-true way to send some really good exposure and SEO back to your brand.

digg

A social-news site where users can discover and share content

Customer interaction is nonexistent on Digg, but the intrinsic value of exposure that is possible through a Digg front page story can highlight other sites where customer communication is strong (such as your blog).

Brands have an opportunity to gain mass exposure on Digg, particularly through the most interesting stories posted about your company. It is a venue for content discovery—brands that do well on Digg can do well anywhere.

Digg went through a rough spot in 2010, but seems poised for a rebound in 2011. Even with the decrease in traffic, it is still the most consistent viral-traffic generation site that can send tens of thousands of visitors to individual posts.

Very good in that even if your story doesn't become popular, it will still get your page indexed very quickly. Also, if your story does become popular, this is likely the best site in terms of getting the attention of bloggers who will link to you.

StumbleUpon

A social-news community where members discover and share Web pages

StumbleUpon is not a tool that is useful for customer communications. There is a random chance of getting a message to your current customers and the user base is growing, but it's still very slim in comparison to other social sites.

The paid campaign can be good for brand awareness, especially after you have attempted getting free, organic traffic to your home page. You can target very accurately, but keep in mind you are paying \$.05 per visit (\$50 CPM).

StumbleUpon is the social media equivalent of a traffic Grand Slam—it doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's huge. Keep discoveries diverse. You never know when you'll get hundreds of thousands, even millions of visitors from StumbleUpon.

Very good if your story makes it to the top page for its tag. Due to StumbleUpon's large user base, many people can find your stories and link to them. For vanity searches, your profile page ranks well, too.

reddit

A social-news community where users post links to the site's home page

Only the extremely adept can use Reddit as a customer communication tool. Any time you open your company up to the growing masses at Reddit, there is a chance it can backfire. Occasionally, everything goes better than expected.

Attempting to build your brand on Reddit is like trying to sell whale meat to Greenpeace. It won't happen, and it's likely to turn very ugly if you try.

Reddit has emerged in the past year as the best social news traffic-generation site on the Internet. Quality and originality are paramount—if your message isn't viral, Reddit will not approve.

If you make the front page, a lot of sites will pick up your story, generating valuable back links. Many of these stories are picked up by reputable sites, giving more trust to your site.

tumblr

A social-networking site where users can ask and answer questions

The growing segment of Tumblr users and the ability to ask and answer questions makes the site a potential darling for customer communications. As the site's exponential growth continues, expect it to rival Twitter as a top-2 communication tool.

Tumblr's simple platform and extreme ability to have content shared on it make it a viable branding tool. GenY is migrating to Tumblr to share opinions—if that demographic is important to your business, your Tumblr presence must be strong.

Images can get traffic. Otherwise, there is no real traffic potential yet. In the coming months, it may expand, but currently almost all activity happens directly on Tumblr itself.

The blogging nature of Tumblr allows for extremely high potential from a link-building perspective. The sites themselves also rank very well in the search engines.

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2010 IS THE YEAR CMOS WILL HEAVILY INVEST IN SOCIAL MEDIA. HERE'S A GUIDE TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HOW BEST TO LEVERAGE MAJOR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES.

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WEBSITE

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A microblogging site that enables users to send 'tweets', or messages of 140 characters or less

Use keyword search monitoring through a program such as Hootsuite, TwitJump or Radian 6 to track what people are saying about you and your competitors.

Offers unique opportunities for Web site integration and to engage with customers in a viral way, helping your company stand out from the masses.

Potential can be large, but promotion is an art form -- promote your brand too heavily and turn off followers, yet don't promote enough and receive little attention.

Value to your site's SEO is limited, but tweets will rank high in search results -- good for ranking your profile name and breaking news, though shortened URLs are of little benefit.



A social networking site where users can add friend, send messages and build their own profile

Great for engaging people who like your brand, want to share their opinions, and participate in giveaways and contests.

Facebook brand pages are great for brand exposure. Jump-start your brand exposure through the ad platform, or hire a Facebook consultant to help you grow your brand presence.

Traffic is decent and on the rise thanks to share buttons and counters, but don't expect massive numbers of unique visitors to go to your site.

Little to no value, aside from blogs picking up and featuring your posted links. Not worth the time expenditure.



An image and video hosting website where community members can share and comment on media

Unnecessary to spend too much time on this, though properly tagged photosets of company events can help customers put a face on the team behind your brand.

Participation in industry-related groups might get your photos, and thus your brand, viewed by people with similar interests, but numbers will be small.

Even if you get tens of thousands of visits to a photo hyperlinked with your URL, click-through rates are among the lowest around.

Heavily indexed in search engines, passing links and page ranks. Also helps images rank higher in Google Images and in building inbound links.



A social networking site for business professionals

Not the primary focus, but customer engagement opportunities are possible by answering industry-related questions, establishing yourself as an expert in the field.

Effective for personal branding and demonstrating your organization's professional prowess. Encouraging employees to maintain complete profiles to strengthen your team's reputation is advisable.

Unlikely to drive any significant traffic to your site, though you never know who those few visits might be from -- perhaps a potential client or customer.

Very high page rank -- almost guaranteed on the first page of search results -- especially for your company name or individual employees' names, but that's about it.



A video sharing website where users can share and upload new videos

Whether you seek to entertain, inform, or both, video is a powerful channel for quickly engaging your customers, responding to complaints, and demonstrating your social-media savvy.

One of the most powerful branding tools on the Web when you build your channel, promote via high-traffic sites, and brand your videos.

Traffic goes to the videos. If the goal is to get traffic back to your site, then add a hyperlink in the video description, but don't expect traffic to correlate closely with video views.

Very good for building links back to your site because videos rank high. Also a tried-and-true way for your brand to gain exposure.



A social news site where users can discover and share content

Not the site's primary strength, though occasionally an objective third-party writeup as a PR effort, perhaps to counteract bad press or customer sentiment, can be promoted.

Opportunities are huge, especially for promoting objective press/blog coverage of your brand. Make sure content doesn't read like an ad, or your site might be banned for being overly commercial.

The grandfather of traffic spikes, so become active in the community or find someone who is. If your site is corporate, then consider launching an industry blog on a noncommercial Web domain to establish yourself as a thought leader.

Very good because even if your story doesn't become popular, then your page will still be indexed quickly. If your story does become popular, this is likely the best site in terms of getting linked to by bloggers.



A social news community where members discover and share webpages

Paid StumbleUpon traffic can be a very targeted method of communicating, but whether you're reaching your existing customers is purely random and costly to determine.

A paid campaign can be good for brand awareness, especially following efforts to get free, organic traffic to your home page. Targeting is very accurate, but keep in mind you're paying 5 cents per visit (\$50 CPM).

Enables a diverse range of people to discover your content and share links via the su.pr link shortener on Twitter. Tagging helps, but you don't want the same people repeatedly giving you a thumbs-up.

Very good if your story makes it to the top page for its tag. StumbledUpon's large user base enables many people to find and link to your stories. For vanity name searches, profile pages rank well, too.



A social news site where community members can vote on stories

Editor-driven and moderated, so this shouldn't be your primary focus.

Noncommercial sites are heavily favored by moderators, so business sites should not waste time in this uphill battle.

Get in the moderators' good graces, and you have a chance to hit absolutely massive numbers -- but it's a long shot.

If you make the front page of Yahoo, then you will get a ton of backlinks, but chances are unlikely unless you are a large, established brand.



A social news community where users post links to the site's home page

The community is fickle, and anything perceived as spam will be destroyed. However, look deep into the categorized "subreddits" to unearth small niche communities, and you could get valuable feedback.

Unless you're a bacon company, don't try to build your brand here. You'll end up banned from the site without even realizing what happened.

If Reddit loves you, then traffic is often right up there with Digg and StumbleUpon. Be careful: Push too hard for votes from your friends and risk being banned, but don't push at all and you'll wind up with nothing.

Make the front page and many reputable sites will pick up your story, generating valuable backlinks and extending trust to your site.



A social bookmarking site used for sharing and storing bookmarked pages

Site is intended for people to bookmark content. You can see what people tag with your brand name, but communication with them is nonexistent.

Not enough ongoing brand recognition to make it worth your while unless you want to be known for providing reference content for later retrieval.

Not as big as it used to be, but informative, massive reference pieces bookmarked for later use can net you a few thousand recurring monthly visitors.

Pretty much everything about the site helps: When your page is bookmarked, it's a direct link back to your site. When you're on the front page of the site, the big category tag pages are full of trust, which will pass directly to your URL.